

GOLF FROM TWO SIDES

BY

ROGER AND JOYCE WETHERED

WITH TWENTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

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To
OUR MOTHER
In recollection of numerous games
and much affectionate encouragement
we dedicate
these pages

PREFATORY NOTE

THE idea of this book was, originally, that my daughter should write some sort of treatise on Golf for young players. It appeared, however, that this would rather narrow the field ; and as Roger volunteered not only to supply the instructional part for boys and beginners, but to enter more deeply into the complicated regions of iron play, it was thought possible to make a book of it which might have a wider appeal. I undertook to help Joyce in the more mechanical business of her task ; but I would wish to make it clear that the matter and principles which she expresses are entirely her own.

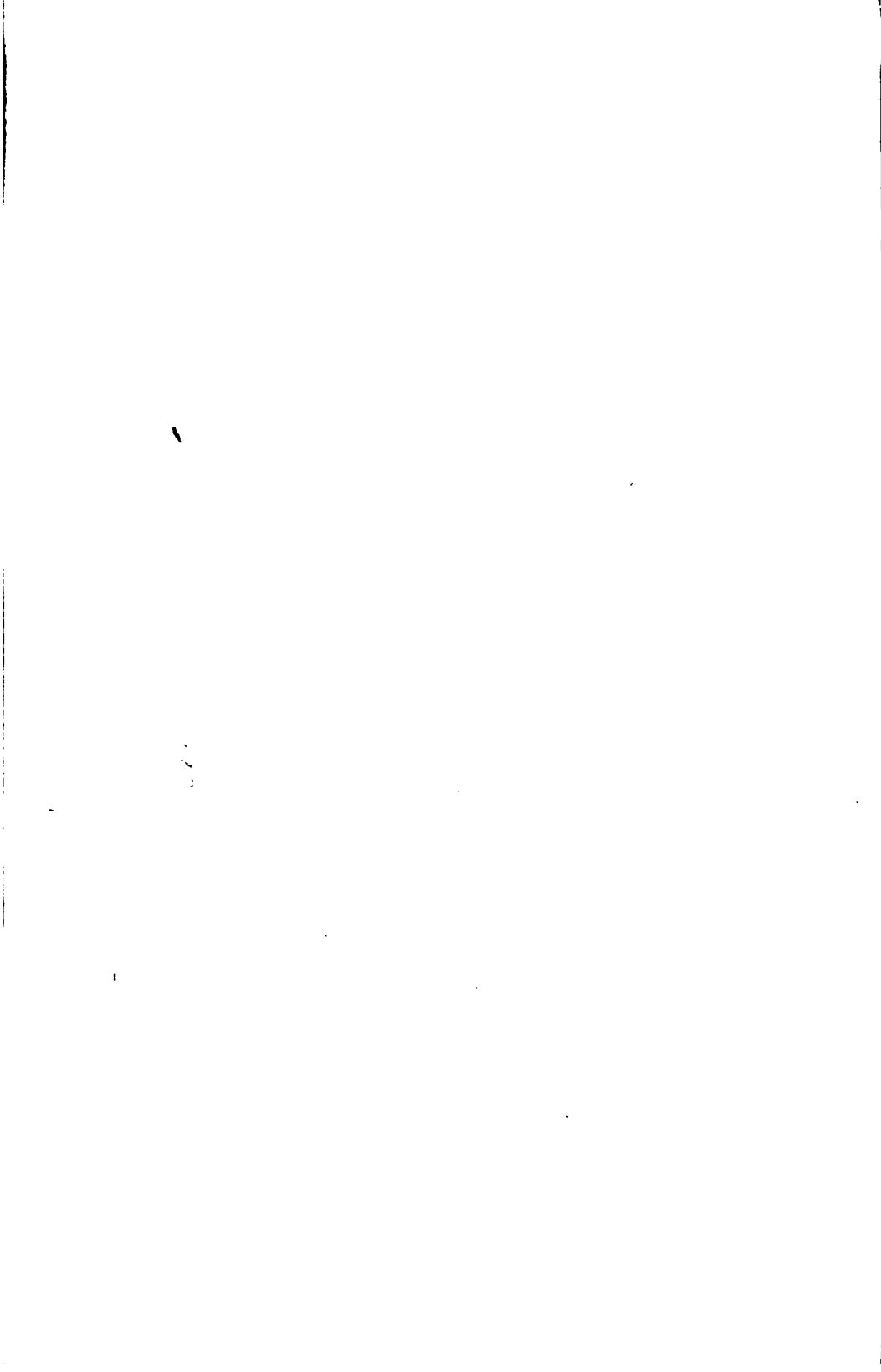
Little attempt has been made to reconcile the views held by both of them, especially as their styles of play differ on a number of points. A certain amount of collaboration has of course been necessary ; but Joyce is responsible for everything dealing with ladies' golf, the chapter on Putting, and the greater portion of that on Tee Shots. Roger has dealt with American and Oxford Golf, and exclusively with all the remaining technical chapters.

For this reason a good deal of overlapping may be found : but there is a compensating interest in the separate expression of their views when the science of the game is approached from two different angles. On the whole, there is sufficient in common to override any slight differences.

H. N. W.

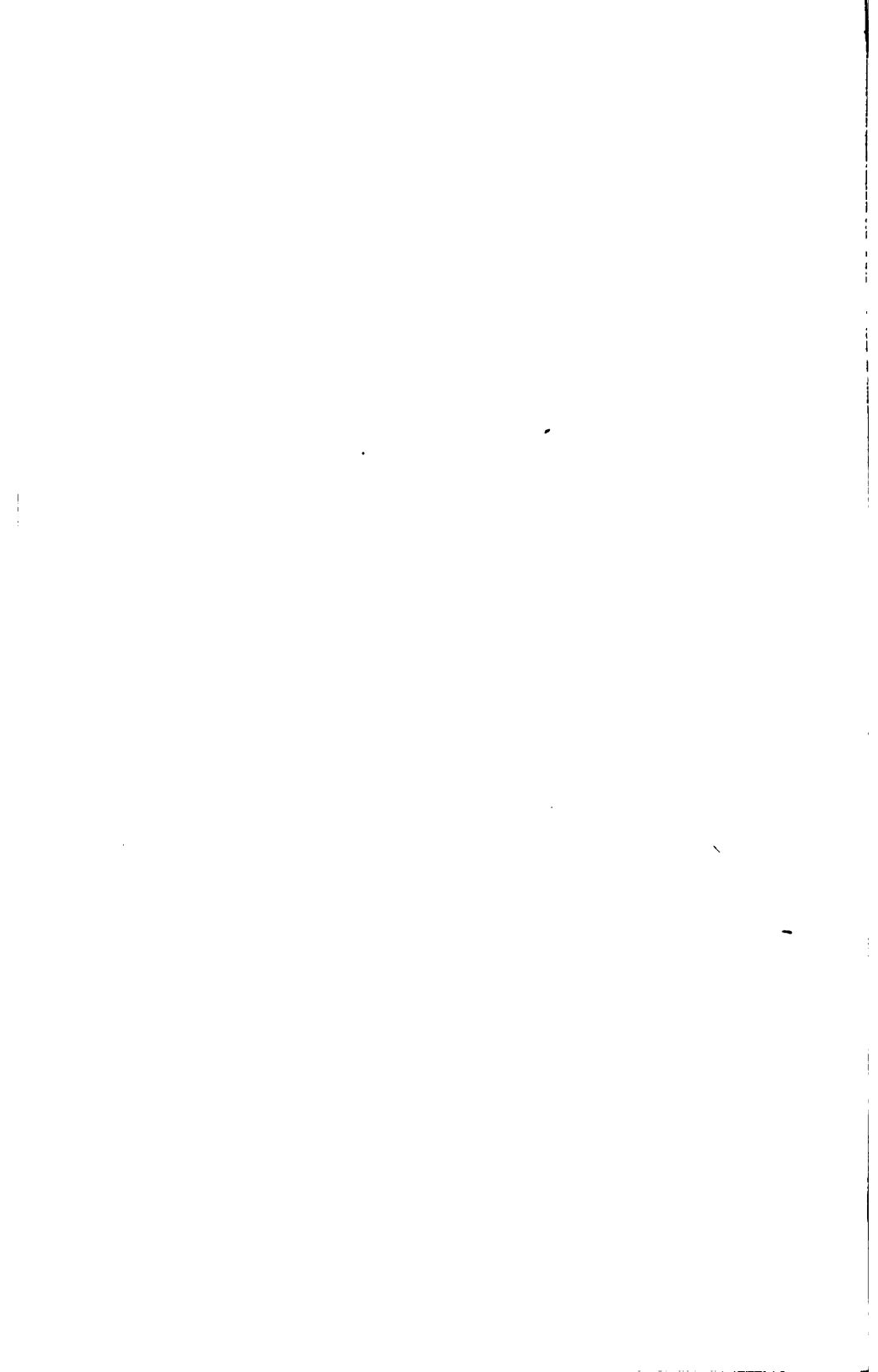
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GOLF FROM TWO SIDES

CHAPTER I

WHAT OTHERS THINK OF IT

WHAT is commonly called 'shop' savours of a somewhat doubtful reputation. The detailed discussion of a favourite hobby is held by most of us to border almost on a discourtesy, whenever a portion of the audience is not specially interested in the subject under debate. It must also be confessed that even golfers, as a class, are regarded with some grave suspicion in this respect by those who cannot see 'what there is to get so excited about in a mere game.' Perhaps it is just as well to realise the full danger of boring our friends; and golf, when discussed in a mixed company, may fitly be regarded as thin ice over which it is advisable to tread delicately. Not that 'shop' is to be deprecated: far from it. If we are honest with ourselves, we all have a sneaking affection for at least our own special variety—when it happens to be unimpeachably good. It is useless for people to say that they hate 'shop' of any kind: they are only deceiving themselves. What they mean is, that they hate other people's, which is a very different thing, and also a very natural instinct. The majority of us are not of an inquiring spirit where the amusements of others are concerned: and there is a general disinclination to venture into recreatory

regions we have not ourselves explored. However that may be, it must be allowed that people do not like to expose their ignorance; and may even covertly experience a measure of disdainful indifference for what lies outside their own line of country.

Speaking of country brings us to those more purely sporting districts where the golfer, especially if he is of a talkative nature, had better be on his guard. He would be wise to remember that 'a game is not a sport and a sport is never a game,' within the strict meaning of the Act. The invariable consequence is that hunting shop and golfing shop are mutually exclusive. They do not mix happily. They combine no better than oil with water. One or the other will be seen to be floating on the top. But I believe, underneath the surface, there is a mutual respect existing between them. It happens that the practice of them is antagonistic: but that is only for the reason that there is rarely room for both in most localities—neither, I might add, the wherewithal for both in most pockets. A sporting uncle of ours, who hails from the shire of the broad acres, expressed this point with some terseness. 'Where you happen to live settles a good deal; but what you have to live on settles a good deal more.' That the lover of outdoor pursuits may cover a field wide enough to include the thrills which belong to all of them requires an unusual set of circumstances. But we know of one all-round sportsman, unbeatable in his day across country and a fine shot in addition, who used, towards the end of his mastership, to sneak home from early cubbing to get in a round of golf before lunch. He was even heard to say that hitting a good drive combined all the joys of all the sports he had ever indulged in.

Golf, however, claims no superiority. Rather the

contrary. There is no question which is the more primitive and original of the two. We are told that 'Sport began as a necessity, and has become a luxury : games began as a luxury, and have become a necessity.' The wonder is, that their results approximate to the same kind of excitements which have become a necessity for the maintaining of a healthy circulation. To anyone who has experienced the dithering effects of a big competitive match, it is interesting to compare the sensations of a big 'shoot.' I have heard one of the keenest confess that a good stand, with people looking on, high pheasants coming with the wind, and the uncertainty of hitting anything, has often reduced him to a state of almost suicidal desperation ; and does not this feeling rather aptly describe the shivers which can assail even the most stout-hearted on the links ? It is indeed strange that our recreations are bound up with so much that cannot be positively described as exactly pleasant, but which, nevertheless, constitute the very salt of life. We must have our recreations ; and they must not, except in dire necessity, be tame.

It will probably be remarked that most of this book takes golf very seriously. But that is surely a sign of the times. It is becoming increasingly difficult to take our games lightly ; and golf, amongst others, has become nowadays a serious business. The eyes of the public are fixed very closely upon its leading players ; international rivalry is assuming a vast deal of importance, and the trumpet-calls are sounding with no uncertain voice to representative golfers to deliver of their best. It is indeed a question which of the games, cricket or golf, is taken by this country the more earnestly from the national point of view. Perhaps cricket : it is a team game with a side working together as one

corporate body. But of the two, golf undoubtedly is the more international, and embraces the whole world. We Britishers certainly feel considerable anxiety as to the destination to which Cups and Ashes are respectively bound. The desire to keep them at home is insistent. So much so, that, when by chance they have departed to another place, the modern crusading spirit enters largely into enterprises for their recovery. Even the players themselves are apt to be overcome by the force of national emotion displayed on occasions. Was not an Englishman, who had valiantly stepped into the breach, rather taken aback, when he was saluted in the streets of Hoylake by an enthusiastic stranger as the 'saviour of his country'?

This popular interest has developed enormously within recent years. The reading public, for some reason or other, delights in the perusal of accounts of important competitions, their dramatic happenings and fluctuating fortunes—events which naturally fascinate players themselves, but which seem also to appeal to a wider circle with only a moderate knowledge of the game. This outside public is actuated purely by an inborn love of sport and an instinctive delight in personal encounter. Only the other day, in a book published in 1900, I came across a passage which was somewhat surprising from the light it threw upon this phase of interest. It said that at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, 'there were scarcely any sports or pastimes that could be called popular. There was no popular interest in any game.' Look at the picture now, and the development which has taken place, even since this was written. At that date it was possible to watch the World's Championship Lawn Tennis Finals at Wimbledon from benches round the court,

with only a hundred or so spectators present. Nowadays the grounds may be so packed that members will stand with little prospect of seeing more than a sight of the ball when it is lobbed high in the air. The same thing is happening in our Golf Championships. The problem of controlling large crowds, in such a manner that play is not interfered with, is becoming urgent.

And the company on the links is only a small portion of the total audience. In the railway train, in the clubs, or at home the scene is put so vividly before the eyes of the reader by a specialised body of reporting experts that in many cases the thrills can be experienced as fully in an armchair as in 'the gallery.' Even the intricacies of golf law percolate into remote minds; and those who refrain from physical participation in the game can, if they will, employ their legal predilections on a code of rules which invites the closest of study. Golf has, in fact, become highly entertaining, not to say exciting, to an ever-increasing public. Mr. Dooley, when he was on his vacation, confessed that he pined for news. 'An' how cud I be happy away fr'm here, if I didn't know how me frind William Taft was gettin' on at goluf? Iv coorse I'm intherested in all that goes on at th' summer capitol. But th' rale intherest is in th' Prisident's goluf. Me fav'rite journal prints exthries about it. "Specyal exthry: six-thirty. Horrible rumour. Prisident Taft repoorted stymied."'

The present-day reporter is a skilled man in his profession, gifted with humour and, in many cases, possessed of very considerable literary accomplishment. He has an unerring judgment in the selection of points of interest. He introduces his public to a surprising

amount of personal detail, and has powers to console by his vivid narrative the reader who was absent from the scene. He is also a man speaking with authority : he can deliver utterances with the impressiveness of an inspired prophet. Mr. So-and-So may find himself in a situation where he has merely to knock his ball on to the green with anything ; instead of which he commits some unbelievable crime. Could anything have been more futile ? Why, an umbrella. . . . And the reader gasps, ' Good heavens, is it possible ? ' The missed putt of the proverbial six inches is an unfailing success. Has not Mr. Bateman described the scene with the brilliant sureness of caricature ? The player of the accursed shot has collapsed on the green, while his unsympathetic opponent cuts a caper for joy. The spectators are writhing in contorted agonies, and a stout gentleman, with the perspiration pouring off his face, is seeking the support of an adjacent tree.

I believe that little incidents of this kind are infinitely pleasing to the ordinary golfer. They tickle his personal vanity to think that the great ones can fail at shots which present no manner of difficulty to himself. He likes to know that ' they are only human after all.' Quite a number, in their heart of hearts, see no very great reason why they should not play golf even as Harry Vardon plays it. They bring off a fine stroke, whether by intention or accident, and cannot quite understand what prevents them from repeating it at any time they choose. Some perverse and malignant fate invariably intervenes and baulks them of their just laurels. ' If only I had not missed four short putts, and had not got into the bunker at the twelfth,' what might not have happened ? To these the interest of the game is undying. With them

time cannot wither nor custom stale the fascination of the links.

But the reader may be one of those who, with much good reason, say that golf is greatly overdone : that so much fuss is made over its importance that it might almost cease to be a game at all. He would be quite justified in taking up this view if he wished. But against this it may be remembered that golf indeed may be serious, yet it has its lighter side. An international player once told me that he enjoyed the game infinitely more when his handicap was eighteen than when it descended to plus six. And the remark is significant. Competitive golf is a thing apart and cannot be otherwise than anxious work. The closest concentration is necessary. Once having embarked in these waters there is no going back. For good or ill it becomes a voyage of adventure with a sting of danger in it. The waves may mount perilously high, but the experiences stir the blood ; and though the strain on nerve and muscle may be severe, there is a pleasure in the fight. To cruise in more quiet waters is in many ways the more pleasant of the two. Which all goes to establish the blessedness of golf, that its appeal is equally strong to its disciples, whatever their age, sex, or handicap may be.

And its appeal is an ancient one. You can trace it back to early periods of Dutch art, which depict it, so far as I recollect, as mostly played on the ice, with clubs somewhat resembling hockey sticks. Evidently they liked slippery greens, and to be down in the recognised allowance of two strokes must have required an uncommon degree of skill. If it actually began as a game to be played in the Christmas season, it would furnish a pleasing theory that, for golf to find its

origin in the water and thence pass to dry land, is all in accordance with the true evolutionary theory. The artistic tradition leads us through the era of Scottish gentlemen portrayed in scarlet uniforms down to these times when the pencil of Tom Webster has familiarised us with the majestic figures of Edward Ray and Cyril Tolley, as famous for their big pipes and clouds of tobacco as for their mighty hitting. He has put us on terms of friendly laughter with the select band of champions ; and we associate Muirfield as much with the picture of ' Mr. Tolley taking for a walk one Mr. Gardiner of America to decide who was the better golfer of the two,' as with all the graphic descriptions which record his famous putt at the thirty-seventh. Tragedy and comedy indeed walk hand-in-hand when great issues are being decided on the links.

Golf has its roots in the past. The game is ancient ; and kings have played it. The Stuarts especially favoured this pastime, and in their day Lords temporal and spiritual appear to have been equally attracted by its fascination. Its origin is obviously aristocratic ; and the character of these antecedents has been well maintained in recent years by Premiers, Presidents, and Ambassadors, who have contributed to its association with high politics. At the same time, in its sustained growth, it has kept step with the democratic trend of our institutions and has touched the further extreme in its general adoption by all classes. One might even say that the golf ball has rivalled the record of the grain of mustard seed. Like a great tree it has spread over the face of the earth. Not only has it become a great British national game, but its empire has extended in every direction. An epitome of its progress may even be read in the history of the old course

at St. Andrews. In the early beginnings play was over only six greens, which became doubled by their use on a homeward journey. The twelve became eighteen; and the old course itself finally threw off a couple of offshoots, which acknowledge their allegiance to the mother links. No governing body of any game guards more jealously this ancient stronghold of traditions and ceremonial, with the clear intention of preserving its essential and historic dignity. What the future may hold in store for its fortunes in this country and abroad, it is impossible to foretell; but of one thing we may be fairly certain, that, in any future history of the social life of our times, the game we are discussing will not be left out of the picture.

CHAPTER II

LADIES' GOLF: ITS STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

FROM what I can gather, lady golfers have obtained a more secure position than ever they occupied before the war. The change is distinctly perceptible. Instead of their standing as club members being very markedly of a courtesy nature, they are now able as a body to speak with greater assurance and a larger measure of authority. Perhaps something of a silent revolution has taken place in this respect as in others.

And this factor is not apparent only in this one department of ladies' excursions into the field of athletics. Lawn tennis and golf have pre-eminently taken a hold upon their hearts. These are the two rival games which appeal the more strongly to their natural liking and also to their competitive instincts. How do they stand with regard to each other? The other day I read an illuminating and instructive phrase in reference to one who had threatened to 'forsake the stern and desperate game of the links for the delightful social parties of the courts.' I wonder if this would be generally acceptable to the majority of lady tennis players—at any rate, the implication of the first part of it. From what I have seen at Wimbledon, I should say that the courts received at least an adequate share of sternness and desperation. Even the most hardened devotee of severe exercise might well be content with

the demands put upon the physique and stamina of the ladies ; and it becomes a matter of surprise and admiration that they display such courageous determination. Lady golfers are accustomed to move at a slower pace and meet a different set of athletic conditions. In each of these strenuous games the demands made upon their enthusiasts are undoubtedly heavy, not only for the power of stroke required, but also as a considerable test of endurance. But judging between them, I should say that the nervous strain in golf is the greater of the two, and that the physical exhaustion which is often felt may be as much due to this cause as to the more protracted exertion experienced on the golf links.

I should not like to express an unauthorised opinion with regard to the advance made in women's lawn tennis, although it is said to have never reached a higher point of excellence ; but I believe it is fairly generally admitted that the standard has risen in the case of our golf. There seems to be a different feeling abroad from what there used to be ; it is treated with a greater air of respect. Not so very long ago I heard it whispered that ladies' golf was 'no good.' The plain shot was all that was expected of us, and our recoveries were expected to be of a very modest description. This is not so much the case now. It is less common to see a look of astonishment on the face of the gentleman whose 'mixed' partner has pitched over a high mound and laid the ball in the neighbourhood of the hole. For one thing, the art of pitching was not supposed to exist in the repertoire of a lady ; whereas the numbers who can now produce the stroke with respectable efficiency may be said to be daily increasing, and the feeling is steadily gaining

ground that women are capable of playing the same kind of golf as the men—naturally on a different level of power—but still a game of the same character and played in much the same way.

In the earlier text-books the game of the ladies was regarded as a thing apart. It belonged to an essentially elementary school, where methods were taught which were considered strictly appropriate to their more delicate constitutions. No doubt this was very right and proper ; but it was in danger of being overdone. Only certain ways of gripping the club were recommended, whereas I can see no reason why ladies should not have a free choice in the matter. Their swings were supposed to be differently constructed, and above all they must not attempt any kind of advanced iron shot. The same distinctions existed in their choice of clubs. It used to be the customary question in a professional's shop to ask whether a particular club was a lady's club or not ; as if there were some physical difficulty which prevented a lady from playing with a man's club. If she were engaged in making a choice she would be carefully diverted to the place where feather-weight drivers and irons scored with large 'L's' were displayed, and the heads would be fitted with shafts of a more than ordinarily whippy nature as more adapted to the limitations of a weaker sex.

But these distinctions have very largely gone by the board. I know of men who will carry a 'ladies' iron' because it suits them ; and for my first championship I used a driver out of Ritchie's bag, which my brother declared he could not use because of its excessive weight. Perhaps that was carrying a fancy for a particular club too far ; but, heavy though it was,

there was no fault to be found with the way in which it behaved on that occasion. A number of prejudices of this sort are, after all, only superstitions ; and there is no need for women to be afraid of thinking for themselves as to the type of golf they shall play or what implements they shall use in the art of striking the ball. The nearer the style of women's play approximates to the models set by the men, the better it will be for their game in the long run.

A distinguished amateur once remarked to me that, whereas amongst the men there were crowds of first-class players, amongst the ladies there were comparatively few of exceptional ability, considering the numbers that took up the game. I cannot help thinking that there is a good deal of truth in this statement. At the present moment it is a correct estimate of the position ; but the time is not far distant when the standard of ladies' play will not only be higher, but will extend over a wider area. Instead of the score of players who may be considered to form the advance guard, there will be an increasing number of what are called ' surprises ' in the near future from the ranks of younger players, who may be at present more or less beginners, but who will set about the game in a more scientific spirit of inquiry, and seriously apply themselves to solve certain of the mysteries which have hitherto been regarded as beyond their reach and as belonging more particularly to the men's own peculiar province.

I can speak on this point with some experience. I can remember some years ago how annoyed I used to feel on those occasions when I asked my brother a question about golf, which I was either too lazy or too ignorant to find out for myself. His invariable

answer was that it was no use telling me anything, since I should never be any good until I found out things for myself. The warning might not be too acceptable at the moment, but the principle he expressed was sound. How often one hears on the links the question asked: 'What am I doing wrong?' The expectation is an answer which will supply a cut-and-dried remedy, some specific which will immediately effect an infallible cure. This cannot be done, or at least very rarely. The playing of golf is an art, and just as art is a matter that closely concerns the individual, so it is necessary for every one to discover the nature of their own faults. The principles of the game require a lucid explanation, but the working out of their application must be largely self-taught. My feeling is that ladies are too inclined to seek for mechanical excellence. Lessons from professionals rather tend to foster this inclination. Not that the professional is in any way to blame if he teaches on the lines of the drill-sergeant. It is difficult to see what other course he could very well adopt. Much can undoubtedly be learnt in this way; but to acquire that extra knowledge which is essential, there is probably not one lady in twenty who will try to penetrate to the root of her troubles and work out her own golfing salvation. With even the best players, whoever they may be, it is a continual fight against one fault after another; and it is necessary to have at one's disposal the power and means of remedying these faults before they take too firm a hold.

'Tips' are often invaluable as affording fields for experiment. When I was seventeen I experimented with every conceivable form of advice before I managed to build up some sort of game which could be called in any

way satisfactory. But when a style is once developed it is better to adhere to it. Modifications certainly may be necessary in the continued efforts towards improvement, but incessant alterations can have nothing but an unsettling effect. It is indeed quite extraordinary what a delicate edge there is to the game of each individual player. The greatest care must be exercised, or its nicety may be lost. It is no uncommon thing to see a player take out a dozen balls and produce the same shot time after time in the belief that practice makes perfect. Theoretically this should be the case ; but practically I have found it worse than useless to repeat shots in practice when once the correct result has been obtained : you are only wasting good strokes. By all means take out a club which has been giving trouble and endeavour to cure any mischief which may have arisen. But having once hit upon a satisfactory remedy do not for the moment attempt to improve upon it. It may appear paradoxical to say so, but I nevertheless believe it to be a fact that the more often you play a shot, ball after ball, correctly, the greater the certainty that presently some error will make its appearance, and the excellence of the discovery which corrected the stroke will have lost half its efficacy.

It has been said that there are fewer really good players in our ranks than might reasonably be expected ; but no ostensible reason exists why this should remain the case. The fault does not lie entirely in the matter of physical strength. There is plenty of that to be seen ; at any rate, quite sufficient for the purpose. The distance obtained from the tee by a large number of ladies is quite surprising ; the physique of the modern lady is fully equal to the demands of ladies' golf, as regarded by itself and not judged from the standard

of the men, who must necessarily always remain in a class by themselves by reason of their physical advantages. In the short game there is no actual bar to ladies holding their own quite comfortably. On the green we have as good performers as could be wished. I doubt whether any man would desire a more reliable partner to assist in the putting department of the game than Miss Helme, for example. If ever evidence was necessary to prove the soundness of her method it was shown in the final of a mixed foursome tournament at Worplesdon, where, in addition to other good work, she finished the match with two consecutive putts of five yards or over, to dash to the ground the hopes which her opponents were beginning to cherish of carrying the match to the last green—and these without the slightest suggestion of fortunate assistance. Another remarkable holier-out from any part of the green is Mrs. McNair, who wields a putter of golden bronze with the same skill that she displays when she elects to play with a tennis racket.

It is in putting and wooden-club play that I consider the strength of ladies' golf lies. As regards their play with the irons, certain weaknesses become apparent. It is in the approach shot that they are disappointing—and the stroke to which I am at the moment referring is the back-spin shot, as it is played by the greatest players, and recognised by them to be the master-stroke of the game. Very few ladies can play this shot; and the question may reasonably be asked: Is the stroke within their reach? On this point I propose to advance a theory which may have little in it, but is at any rate a suggestion worth risking. It is often said that a girl or woman cannot throw. This is not strictly true; but whether from want of practice or

the absence of some necessary muscles, as is sometimes stated, the action of throwing is a rare art amongst our sex. It is the common thing in mixed cricket to see a girl bowl underhand with natural ease, and to send up the ball underhand from a distance ; but when the attempt is made to throw, or even bowl overhand, there certainly does seem to be something missing in the majority of cases. The full swing in golf appears to me in many respects similar to the underhand action in cricket ; and the best iron-club play has an action of its own, which resembles an actual throw with a cricket ball. If there is anything valid in this theory, it would explain the fact that ladies mostly play their irons with a natural swing, which tends to lift the ball and causes it to run freely when it pitches. This stroke, which may be called the ' pitch and run,' is indeed played very well by them, and is most serviceable ; but the difficulties of present-day golf courses seriously handicap the player who has to rely almost entirely on this method of playing iron shots. Anyone, however, who can play the back-spin shot really well will score time after time, and will find any trouble taken over its cultivation in no sense wasted. If I were asked to describe the shot, I should suggest that a lady should visualise the stroke as essentially a downward one, played smoothly and without a vestige of jabbing. The first thing necessary is to eradicate as much looseness as possible, to get the one motion up and the one motion down through the ball. What generally happens at the top of an iron-club shot is that the wrists turn, as it were, a little extra corner, which tends to bring the shaft of the club too near to the horizontal. It is necessary to resist this extra little

bit of wrist movement, so that the angle between the back of the right hand and the right forearm is not diminished more than can be helped at any point of the backward swing. The right hand, in other words, must decline to relax at the wrist. If from the top of the back swing the club is brought down rhythmically on to the ball, so that it tucks itself under it, a portion of turf will be taken after the ball has been struck, and all will be well—with one most important proviso, that the club must be stopped at a definite point in its forward movement. The hands must not be allowed to rise loosely towards the sky at the finish, otherwise the cleanness of the shot is spoilt and an element of run is imparted to the ball, which for the purpose of this stroke is to be avoided. A firm back swing like the spoke of a wheel, a precise and rhythmic blow struck down and through the ball, a definite stopping of the club at a point which prevents the head rising unduly, and there ought to be a feeling of bite on the ball, which almost seems to compel it to run up the face of the club. It requires a certain strength of wrist and forearm, but not more than is possessed by a goodly portion of ambitious lady players. The feeling of the hands comes into the stroke a good deal. They have to do with the quality of hit which characterises the back-spin shot, and upon them seems to rest the actual business of playing the ball or of placing it, as it were, on the spot where it is intended to pitch.

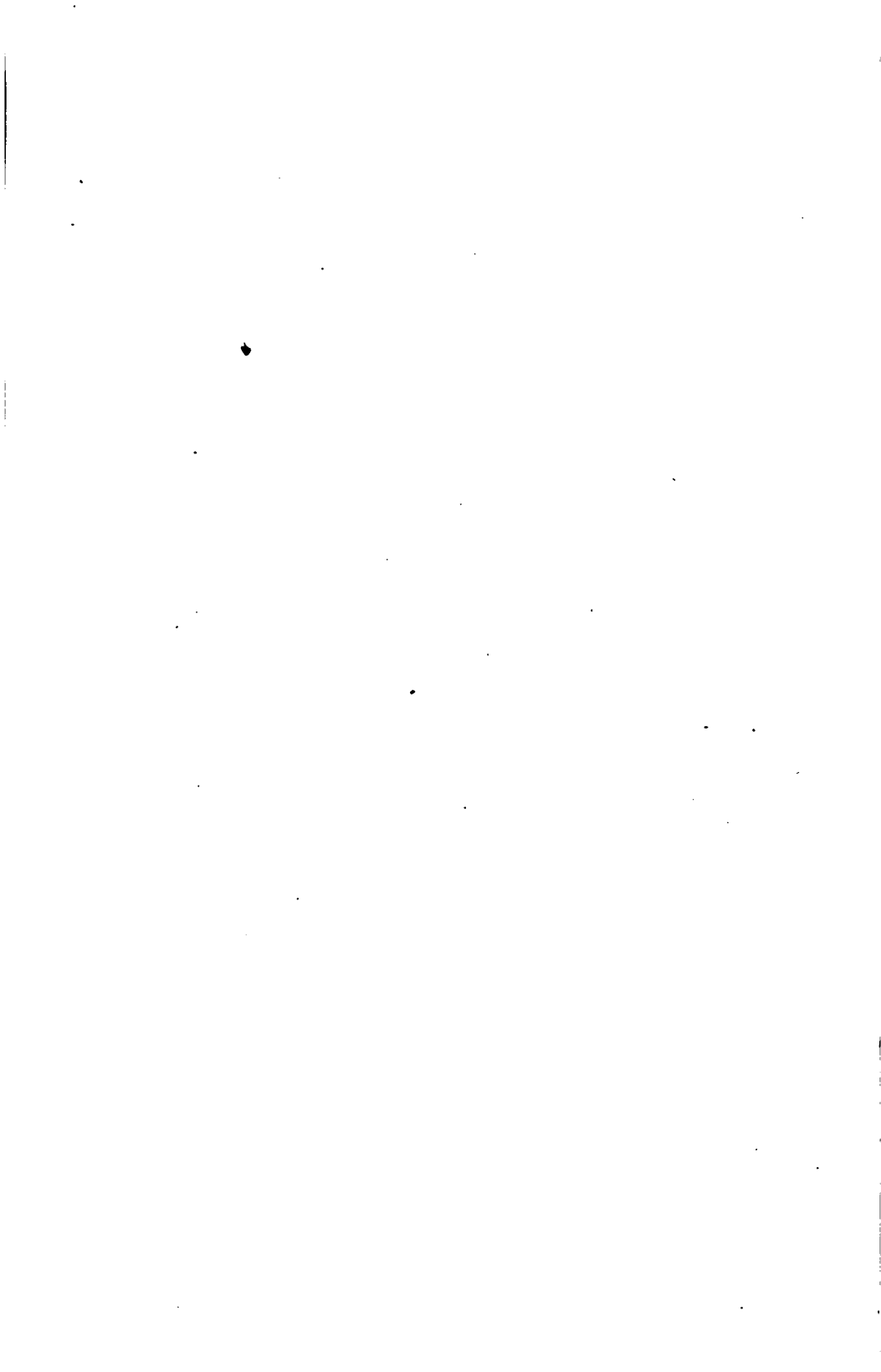
I should like to add that this stroke is especially valuable when the ball is lying close to the ground or even in a slight depression. It is fairly obvious that, when the ball is lying so tightly that there is practically no room for the club head to cut in between



Driving-iron : Top of back swing.



Driving-iron : Finish.



the ball and the ground, it becomes necessary to obtain as much grip of the ball on the club as is possible. Once this grip is firmly clinched, the ball exercises a superior measure of obedience and is more likely to go where the player intends.

With an approaching club such as a mashie, it is of vital importance to remember that the head and the body must not move out of position until the ball has been fully played. Try to make a point of keeping the eye firmly fixed on the point at the back of the ball which is to be struck, and to wait until the face of the club has obliterated that point from view by its actual contact with it. In fact it is best to make sure of seeing the club head meet the ball whenever an approach shot is in progress. In fuller shots this might be a counsel of perfection, and the same insistence might not be held necessary in the same degree.

There is another short approach shot, played with a niblick, which can be extremely useful when the ball is lying more easily on softish ground and fairly well cocked up. The immediate object is to get the ball well into the air. This little detail sometimes is not sufficiently recognised as important. Give the ball a fairly lofty journey. That will enable it to expend its energy before it pitches on the green, and prevent it straying too far. If you imagine the swing to be in the nature of the letter V, you will get something of the idea of a flick into the stroke. Unless executed with some neatness, it may very easily go wrong; but short shots over an intervening bunker on to the green require a treatment of this kind, because a well-lofted shot played from near the edge of the green may escape in its air journey much awkward country.

Amongst the best lady performers with iron clubs there are two interesting contrasts in Miss Joy Winn and Miss Joan Stocker. The latter obtains her excellent results not by applying cut to the ball, but by using a long swing, which, accurately played, hits a high ball dropping very straight on the pin with only a short run. Miss Winn favours a more summary method and plays her mashie in a true professional manner. She hits the ball with a click by means of a fairly quick swing, which does not go back far. In this way she obtains a considerable amount of back spin and pulls the ball up with surprising quickness. Both these ladies owe much of their success to their specialising in this part of the game, and their methods are well worth watching.

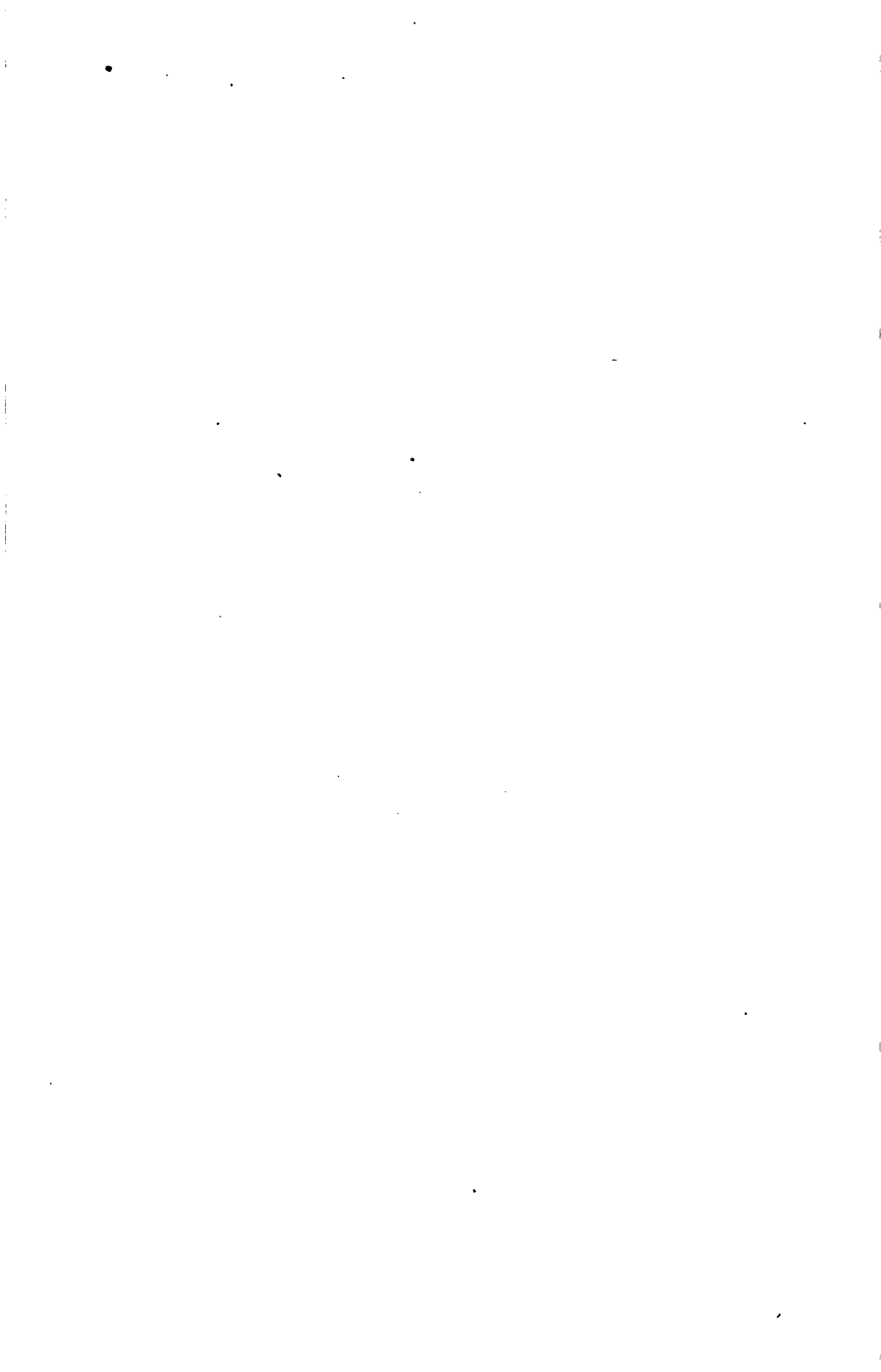
But Miss Cecil Leitch is, *par excellence*, a great iron player. She can play all the shots. From considerable distances she can produce the particular variety which the occasion demands, low raking shots with plenty of run up to the hole or long carries to pitch on the green and stop there. It is in the long game, first and foremost, that champions must excel, and with wood and iron clubs Miss Leitch has shown an outstanding excellence, which has laid the foundations of her reputation. For some years her name has been a household word as standing for a unique record in ladies' golf, and for that reason has attracted an amount of interest, which is justified not only by her intimate knowledge of the game but by her proficiency in putting it into practice. She also possesses a great asset in a quality which might very well be called generalship—a type of character which, from the psychological point of view, contributes very largely to the promotion of a player to the front



Niblick Approach : Back swing.



Niblick Approach : Finish.



rank. It is only necessary to recall for an illustration of this gift the numerous occasions on which Miss Leitch has pulled desperate matches out of the fire, in order to realise the intensity with which she plays the game, and the additional fraction of concentrated energy which she can summon to her aid in a close finish. I have had the good fortune to meet her in three consecutive Championship Finals over thirty-six holes, and I can truthfully say I never wish to indulge in more exacting ordeals. There were also two other occasions on which we played against each other in county matches, and during the lunch interval which divided them she made the remark: 'You are rather fond of fireworks, aren't you?' I believe in saying this she unconsciously suggested the only way it is possible to hold Miss Leitch. Something out of the ordinary has to be done to stem the tide, because the tide runs very hard from the very start. She has the enviable faculty of being able to commence right away with par figures or under, which gives a slower or less confident opponent a lot of leeway to make up and an infinite amount of trouble to extricate herself from a desperate position.

From the tee up to the green there is no lady who can bring off such impressively powerful strokes. Being gifted with a fine physique, she can employ with deadly effect that element of punch in her full shots which, by means of a strong right wrist, enables her to deliver a powerful blow upon the ball in a downward direction. Apparently it is the same quality of shot with all her clubs. With her irons the downward nature of the blow is more accentuated, and the turf is taken with a firmness which speaks for the strength that lies behind the stroke. On the green and in the short game she

is also consistently sound, rarely dropping an essential stroke ; but the great feature of her match-winning power lies in the length of her wooden-club play, and more especially the approach with the iron, which, when it is played with the accuracy and sense of strength which Miss Leitch has at her command, cannot fail to produce an impression of ascendancy.

An interesting contrast of style is to be seen in the wooden-club play of Miss Molly Griffiths, who obtains exceptional results with clubs which are extraordinarily light. Her swing is something quite distinct in itself as regards ladies' golf. It is nearest to the model of the professional in its quickness, compactness, and general 'nip.' In fact, it is even a little reminiscent of one of our leading professionals, and I believe she obtains her distance, which with such light clubs is quite amazing, by something of the same use of the forearms in order to carry the club through at a very high rate of speed at precisely the right moment. Miss Griffiths also plays an effective brassie shot with the least possible trouble. A fraction of time is sufficient for her to address herself to the ball, the club flies round at express speed, and the flight of the ball is low and well controlled.

One word about style. There is something unmistakable about a fine golfing style, and amongst ladies I consider that Miss Alexa Stirling has the finest. The pattern is quite markedly that of the leading American amateurs. There is the same cutting out of unnecessary flourish. And, when once the stance has been firmly and simply taken, the club head is withdrawn from the ball with the characteristically even control which is emphasised in another chapter as the hall-mark of American golf. The swing with

the wooden clubs is rhythmical and extremely true, and the club head meets the ball without the slightest break in its passage to a full follow through. With her irons Miss Stirling employs a full swing and strikes the ball with refreshing cleanness. The shot with her mashie is not marked by a great deal of stop, the intention evidently being to rely upon truth of swing and accuracy of hitting. Over here I fancy she found the variability of our greens rather puzzling. The conditions on either side of the Atlantic appear to differ so widely in the matter of climate and the character of the courses, that it is becoming a matter of increasing difficulty for visitors in either country to acquire within the space of a month or two that feeling of comfortable confidence which can reduce a game of exceeding difficulty to some measure of comparative ease.

In these pages I have only taken a very few typical instances to illustrate various points of ladies' play. To indulge in a wider field of criticism would require a long experience and very considerable personal knowledge. There is no doubt that a vast amount of individual proficiency exists in the various departments of the game, and that the patches of brilliance, which are constantly coming to the surface, are a sufficient indication of what ladies are capable of doing, and are doing with increasing frequency.

CHAPTER III

INSTRUCTIONAL

1. *Young Boys*

Boys for golfing purposes must be divided into two categories: those who are true lovers of the game, and those who regard it as a means of filling up the time during the summer holidays, between the cricket of the previous term and the football of the coming winter. To the boy who is an adept, or even an enthusiast, in these two national games, golf will naturally be looked upon with a measure of contempt, and his education in it must not be attempted too seriously. Rather, as is suggested in another chapter, he should be left to enjoy himself on the links in his own manner, when, where, and how he pleases. The time may come when he may begin to look upon golf in a more reflective light, and it is only then that he should be coached to any marked extent. Cricket and football should rightly occupy a boy's attention to the exclusion of a milder form of athletics, and golf should only be encouraged in those cases when disinclination or the lack of those qualities which make for success in school games compels him to take up the royal and ancient game of Scotland.

There are boys, however, who are possessed with an insatiable desire to play golf, and are perfectly happy

when allowed to spend their holidays with a rusty iron, and a golf ball that might almost escape recognition as such. No hope can be entertained for a boy of this sort. His parents must become reconciled to the fact that, provided he is encouraged upon the right lines, he will become a first-class player. It is useless to insist that cricket must be his god. He may play cricket and enjoy it, but the instinct for golf is in him. It may be dormant for a while, but the sight of teeing grounds and putting greens will revive old memories and inspire him to fresh endeavours. The golfing craze in a small boy can develop into a positive fever. The collecting of postage stamps will pale beside it.

To excel in the majority of games it is necessary to commence young, because it is between the ages of twelve and twenty that the imitative faculty is at its strongest. During those years hero worship is rampant in his being, and the young golfer is certain to have his golfing hero whom he seeks to imitate both in style and mannerisms. It is therefore wise to allow him to indulge this gift to the fullest extent by affording him opportunities of watching the leading players in their exhibition matches whenever practicable. From them he will learn, by dint of incessant copying, the rhythm of the golf swing, the grip, the stance, and everything connected with their method of play even down to the minutest details. For a fortnight he may even imagine himself a miniature George Duncan, and the following week he may have invested himself with something of the atmosphere of Abe Mitchell. All the while he is playing shots of his own in different ways, but is firmly convinced, nevertheless, that he is actually reproducing the strokes of others—a point of view that is apparent only to his inner consciousness and not to the watchful eyes of the

onlooker. It is indeed true that by a faithful admiration of his hero and the inevitable imitation of him, he may in course of time very nearly acquire an identical style. At this stage in his progress it is highly important that the young golfer should be lifted out of his rut, removed from this particular sphere of influence, and left to his own resources. His individual golfing character will soon assert itself. He will begin either to think out his own salvation or discover a new model. The latter event is the more likely contingency. When he has survived this humdrum life of youthful experiments, he will come into his own at about the age of eighteen or twenty. Probably by then he has grown tired of idolising great players, or the opportunities of imitating any one professor in particular have ceased to come his way. Mere imitation yields to the exercise of the critical faculty. During the next year or so he formalises in his mind all the impressions he has gained and falls definitely into his own style of play. From that time onwards he loses the power to imitate, and gathers his knowledge in a newly developed capacity of being able at last to detect method.

Perhaps I may illustrate this gradual evolution from my own experience. At the age of twelve and fourteen I am told that my style was a pocket edition of Fred Robson's until he removed to another course; and then Mr. Colin Aylmer swam into my ken with all the glamour of great performances about him. From that moment I was a changed golfer up to the time when he too departed and I was left to my own devices. Slowly my present style to all intents and purposes began to take shape, and my game was built up upon a mass of good and bad advice, and upon my personal observation. I am inclined to think that this is no

isolated experience ; that it may easily happen to any boy who from the beginning shows more than an ordinary interest in the game.

By all means let the young pupil during the most impressionable years of his life develop the imitative faculty to his utmost while it is in his power to do so. Not only is it an invaluable method of instruction, but it gives an additional charm to a game in which the technique is especially tedious to the youthful mind.

The question presents itself, How much should be left to the haphazard fancy of the boy himself, and to what degree should the instructor feel responsible in matters dealing with preliminary tuition ? On no account attempt to form a boy's style too early. It is a profitless task and presents endless difficulties. Rather let the watchful parent or the professional restrict himself to the correction of very obvious faults, and ignore entirely the minor errors of style and execution. It is the enumeration of these few but definite faults which forms the important matter of this section.

Firstly, a boy's grip of the club. It is more than likely that he will not be able to use a grip corresponding with the overlapping grip, in which the little finger of the right hand either rests upon the forefinger of the left, or fits into the groove between the first and second fingers. The size of his hands and the undeveloped strength of the fingers may not allow such a complicated grip upon the club shaft, and it should not be insisted upon for that reason. The manner in which the hands are set and their relation to one another needs attention, but only in those cases when they appear to be held in awkward or impractical positions. For instance, a tendency to present the back of the left hand towards

the ground must be checked, and it will do no harm if the boy is encouraged to show the back of the hand, so that the instructor, standing directly in front of his pupil, may see, at any rate, one of the root knuckles when the club head is in position behind the ball. Any exaggeration, however, must be avoided. If the thumb of the left hand is placed on and down the shaft—and I believe this to be beneficial—then the grip of the right hand should fit evenly upon it, so that the thumb nail, at any rate, may not be seen. The right hand in this way does not grip the club too much under the shaft. Finally the shaft must be held in the fingers of both hands, but it will be noticed in a great many cases that boys have difficulty in preventing the shaft from slipping into the web of the right hand at the top of the swing, although they may have commenced the swing with the orthodox finger grip. This is not an alarming symptom and should not be criticised too severely, since it is only the immature weakness of the fingers asserting itself. If this slackening of the grip with the right hand should be observed in the short approaches, the habit should certainly be discouraged.

In view both of economy and expediency the young beginner should not be presented with a driver. The straightness of its face must needs be an added difficulty to him in his attempt to lift the ball from the ground, because height with a driver is only acquired by extra hard hitting, and not by spooning the ball into the air. Let him therefore be given a brassie with a sufficiency of loft to enable him to hit a moderately high shot, swinging naturally and comfortably within himself. Thus he will gain confidence. Let him practise with his brassie without any tee; this will teach him to keep his eye on the ball, and confine

his efforts to hitting a clean blow without special regard for length.

The faults to be guarded against are chiefly in the movement of the body. Suggest that the body should not move back with the club in the up swing, and insist that the head should remain in much the same relation to the ball throughout the stroke. Forbid a falling back upon the right leg at the finish of the swing, and tell him to let the arms fly out after the ball with all the abandon of which he is capable. Stop him pressing. It is most important that steadiness should be acquired as early as possible.

At any seaside resort, where golf links and practice grounds are to be found, small boys may be seen gathered together, hitting their paintless golf balls with complete disregard for danger. Amongst this company you may be certain that the most promising are by no means the longest hitters. The lad who swings the most easily, and hits his ball with greater regularity than the others, will outstrip his fellows. Distrust brilliance at too early an age. This and the desire to impress his friends ensures a tragic collapse before the age of fifteen.

The harassed teacher of the young golfer may notice with some consternation the exceeding relish with which a small boy selects a mashie when an iron is obviously the club required. This only shows his preference for the extra loft and the instinctive dislike for a straighter club. He knows he can get the height with his mashie, and for distance he relies upon his ability to press. Do not be in a hurry to overcome his antipathy towards the mid-iron. It is a tricky club to use when you are not more than five feet high, and by taking the lofted club the pupil is discovering

the first principle of iron play, the power to hit hard. One day when his strength has increased, he will take the mid-iron with the confidence with which he fell back upon the mashie, and the time may even come when the driving-iron and the cleek may have no terrors for him. Do not think that this advice with regard to robust mashie play contradicts the solemn warning delivered in connection with the striving for length with the brassie. Distance with wooden clubs is obtained by timing and true swinging, while the crispness of iron play depends upon hard hitting. You may observe in the execution of a boy's prodigious feats with a mashie that the swing exceeds the recognised length advised in connection with iron clubs, but this is only due to the flexibility of his wrists and the inability to hit hard in any other way.

A boy, however promising he may appear, is apt to become slipshod as far as his footwork is concerned. In the back swing his tendency to pivot upon the very point of his left big toe is hard to resist, and it is invariably accompanied by a corresponding position of the right foot at the finish of his shot. Now this habit will considerably affect the accuracy of his game, and if he persists in it, the fruits of his natural skill will not be enjoyed to their fullest extent. It is essential as early as may be, not only to acquire flexibility of footwork, but also that solidity of stance throughout the swing which is a foundation of good play. From a careless ground-work in this direction a boy may never reach that standard of golf to which he should eventually attain. It is advisable, therefore, to insist upon the pupil's obedience in this matter, because in his enthusiasm for the swing itself he will be inclined to overlook the importance of restrained footwork. The left

heel should be lifted little more than just clear of the ground in the back swing, and after the ball has been struck the right heel should not be too ready to fly up, but should conform gradually to the requirements of the follow through. If this principle is not carefully observed, all manner of troubles may accumulate from an apparently insignificant cause. The immediate effects will be a pronounced upward movement of the head which is disastrous in itself, an undesirable freedom of body movement in the nature of a lateral sway, and finally the logical result of all these evils, inadequate control of the club head. In dealing with boys, therefore, do not confuse them so much with axioms on style and the details that are associated with them, but rather concentrate entirely upon the dangers, of which there are none more threatening than the misemployment of the soles of the feet, because upon them and their correct behaviour the accuracy of the swing depends.

All boys sway a little when they attempt to putt. It is a sympathetic movement by which they hope to direct the ball upon what, even in their new-born optimism, they realise to be a narrow path. They will probably continue in this vicious practice until they discover for themselves something to take its place. Putting method, like all other methods, will have little significance for them in the first flush of youth. The more precocious may adopt the precept that 'Practice makes perfect.' I know one small boy who was distressed at his lack of consistency on the green, but professed that he had a solution for all his difficulties. He said: 'I am soon going to stay by the links for a whole month and I shall practise putting for half an hour before breakfast every day. Then

I shall be able to putt well.' Boys as a rule, however, are not interested in this part of the game, and all that an instructor may do at first is to supply his charge with a workmanlike suggestion by which the ball may in some way be induced to enter the hole. One of the best perhaps is the fixing of a spot about a foot in front of the ball on the correct line, over which the ball must be struck firmly and cleanly with as little suspicion of stabbing as possible. Upon such a simple idea even a lad may pin his faith and gain something of that blind confidence which is the beginning and end of putting.

As a final suggestion to those who are interested, the composition of the boy's set of clubs may be recommended upon the following scale: a brassie, a cleek, a mid-iron (for rare occasions), a mashie, and a putter are the essentials, and their number should not be increased until his prowess warrants the inclusion of a driver and a mashie niblick in his bag. Particular attention should be paid to their pattern. The brassie should have a head of reasonable proportions, neither too large nor too small; but let it be an honest weapon which will not flatter only to deceive, nor yet make the game too difficult. The iron clubs should be as good of their kind as possible, not too much hooked in the face but set very nearly true from the socket, and showing a good distinct blade. The shafts at present must not be of the poker description, but of hard seasoned wood with a stiff spring in them. Those which are soft and green will lose their shape rapidly and develop into what are popularly known in golfing parlance as 'fishing rods.' The putter had best be made of iron, without a crook or excessive loft. Later the pupil may practise and perfect his swing by means

of an aluminium putter, but at present a steel putter will suit his requirements admirably, since it secures the best results from an imperfect method. Each club should in weight err upon the side of lightness, and by that I mean that they should be no heavier than the average ladies' set.

Thus equipped and encouraged by every means that tact and patience may devise, the young player should improve gradually year by year. So soon as he has definitely set out upon his adventures and has begun to hit a meritorious shot occasionally, his keenness will not flag. He will indulge in practice swings upon every tee, probably to the annoyance of his partner who may be driving at the time; he will play three rounds a day if the links are short enough to allow such a display of energy, and he will even run between his shots. But the time may arrive when the deeper mysteries of the game will become more apparent, the pastime that was once a joyous scramble will assume almost a holy aspect, and the pursuit of it may be to him something of a religion.

2. *Late Beginners*

Amongst those who have joined the ranks of golfers rather late in life are men with athletic achievements behind them, and others whose work lies in big towns; while country gentlemen also, with little to occupy them, may have inflicted upon themselves the self-imposed slavery which we know as the game of golf. It is to this company who have taken this plunge, and decided to make a commencement that I propose to address this second section dealing with the tuition of beginners. They are beginners in the true sense of the word,

because, unlike the boy who has drifted easily into the game from his early youth, they are attempting something which is foreign to their natures and differs from their other pursuits. In fact, efficiency in other games may be a hindrance rather than a help during the stages of preliminary instruction. In the case of a man of over thirty years of age the faculty of imitation will have become dead in him a long while since, and he will have nothing to befriend him in his first painful struggles but the instruction of his professional, the hints he may gather from all and sundry, and the assistance of a golfing library. Compared with the priceless gifts of boyish imitation these are slender means upon which to rely and only the greatest concentration will avail him anything. His hopes need not be dashed to the ground on this account, and there is no reason why these difficulties should not be overcome effectively and perhaps with something approaching success. What the beginner must realise is the nature of his limitations. Only in the flights of imagination may he swing like a professional, though he may sometimes achieve equal power by other methods. Cricketers have made good golfers, but their style will always suggest that a cricket bat is in their hands and not a golf club. Tennis players also have their peculiar troubles, and the perfect golf swing is not theirs for the asking; indeed, if it is not actually out of the question, it is at any rate a remote ideal. Perhaps it is even an advantage never to have excelled in other games, and a late beginner with less experience starts off with a clean sheet and an open mind.

In his choice of clubs the beginner must rely upon the advice of a professional, but it will be as well if he is guided in his selection of them by certain prin-

ciples. The man with a strong physique will be unwise to acquire anything but a heavy set of iron clubs, while his driver and brassie must be strong in their shafts and should weigh no less than fourteen ounces. The slightly built player should see that his clubs are upon the light side, and a driver of more than thirteen and a half ounces should not be used. During his search for wooden clubs the beginner will notice a large variety distinguished by a wide difference in the shape of their heads. There are the small bullet-headed drivers, graceful pear-shaped models, rounded heads of an ordinary size, and very often heads of magnificent dimensions that might suggest that the golf ball was a mighty thing indeed and not of a standard diameter. But to this last model I would call his attention. It has a fine breadth of face, which is shaped in the form of a bulge designed to counteract a tendency to slice or pull. The hitting surface is deep enough to satisfy the fozzler who is inclined with the ordinary club to strike the ball below its centre; and the head is hewn upon such generous lines and presents such a wide expanse of resplendent varnish that even the most timorous will be inspired with some degree of confidence. It is a club of which anyone might be proud; but the beginner especially will find it suited to his needs. He will require also a brassie, which should resemble the driver as far as possible.

He will avoid a cleek as if it were the very devil. A driving-iron of substantial weight and with enough loft on its face to make it appear reassuring may take the place of the cleek. A mid-iron comes next, and its owner will ever cherish its possession, even to venturing the opinion that there never was its equal. This is the peculiarity of mid-irons; they make friends

very easily. Then comes the mashie, and more important still the mashie niblick. Of the mashie little may be said, provided that it looks generally comfortable when placed upon the ground and is fitted with a really stiff shaft. Concerning the mashie niblick, however, the problem is more difficult, and a good club of this species will not be immediately discovered. It must possess the following precautionary virtues: an inconsiderable socket in order to prevent shanking or even the thought of it, a rounded sole to reduce the danger of catching the club head unnecessarily in the ground and also to assist in extricating the ball from a cuppy lie, and finally a deep and lofted face for reasons which are sufficiently obvious. The choice of a putter may be left to the fancy of the individual, and may be even changed once a week until the umbrella-stand may be so stacked with them that it no longer serves the purpose for which it was primarily intended. A golfing armoury of this character and a serviceable bag will complete his purchases, together with a few second-hand balls with which to commence operations. A quiet spot and a wide stretch of fairway should constitute his practice ground.

The first problem to present itself will be the question of grip. In these days a palm grip is becoming rapidly extinct. Several famous golfers, of course, exploit such a manner of holding the club, but the ordinary player will find that a finger-grip of some description will give the sensation of greater control, and is less inclined to slip during the process of the swing. For those whose hands are large enough—the length of the fingers does not count particularly—the overlapping grip will be found the most satisfactory. Briefly it consists in a grip which holds the handle

of the club chiefly with the forefingers and thumb of each hand. The little finger of the left hand need not cling too firmly to the shaft, while the little finger of the right hand overlaps the left forefinger. The intermediate fingers of both hands are bunched together as much as possible. This means that the grip occupies a distinctly small portion of the shaft, and this tends to concentrate the sphere of operations. The pressure of the upper part of the palms on the shaft must be perceptibly felt or else the club itself will hang from the grip like a door on loose hinges. The back of the left hand must be clearly visible, and the thumb should lie straight down the shaft. The right hand fits neatly over the thumb in a position that corresponds practically to that which you would adopt should you elect to play with the right hand only.

If the hands do not seem large enough to hold the club in this manner—the test, however, should be an exhaustive one—dispense with the overlapping grip of the little finger of the right hand and let it fit naturally upon the shaft against the left forefinger. If after a time with either the overlapping or the alternative grip you find that the position of the left thumb down the shaft appears to serve no useful purpose, reluctantly allow it to curl under the shaft and grip firmly with it in this manner.

Now to consider the next preliminary—the stance. Nothing is so valuable in golf as a sound position from which to address the ball, and the question of the stance should not be lightly disregarded, since it determines to some extent the direction of the down swing. But of even greater importance is the exact repetition month after month of the stance which has been finally

adopted. It is obvious that an ever-changing mind with regard to the relation of the feet one to another may have disastrous results, in that instinctive modifications will constantly be creeping into the swing in order that it may fall in with the constant alterations which are taking place in the stance itself. The golfer who is uncertain of the basic arrangement of his feet may be likened to the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. It is not my intention to be dogmatic upon the actual stance that the beginner should adopt, provided he sticks to his principles when they have once been formed; but I should recommend in the first place that his heels should be separated by at least a foot and a half. A real straddle should not be altogether rejected upon the ground of ungainliness if it produces satisfactory results, since it supplies a firm base from which to conduct operations and also helps in the control of the body. A stance which is excellent in every way, and is suitable to any club with which distance is some object, may be taken up as follows. Stand with the feet apart and precisely square to the line of play; then withdraw the left foot a matter of three inches to the rear, and finally bend both legs very slightly at the knees; lock yourself into this posture from the hips down to the toes and your stance is set. The right toe will be turned a fraction back, but the left toe will point a half-right angle in the direction of the hole. The ball, when it is teed, should lie exactly opposite to the left heel. The distance that should separate the player from his ball cannot be laid down. It must be left to the discretion of the player himself or decided for him by his instructor. All that may be said on the point sounds unavoidably like a platitude. He should not

be so far away from the ball that undue stretching of the arms is required to reach it, nor yet so near that the arms are crumpled up in such a manner that comfortable swinging is rendered difficult. At any rate he should find out what suits him in this direction, and refrain most decidedly from changing the distance with the idea of temporarily correcting a fault.

Any written description of the golf swing will appear unintelligible to the beginner unless it is accompanied by some show of personal illustration, and the advice to be found in a manual of golf is only useful in supplying a few hints towards the correction of faults and in the statement of some general principles upon which to work. The instructor who is on the spot is the man upon whom the chief responsibility rests, and he will only be successful in his methods of teaching if he regards each pupil from a separate point of view, as representing a fresh problem both temperamentally and physically, and builds up his game according to the requirements of an individual case. A stoutish man, for instance, must be fitted with a short swing at all costs, while his more willowy brother may perhaps indulge in a freer style of play. It is only the sympathetic teacher who will prosper in his coaching of beginners. Those who are determined to hurl rigidly orthodox rules of play at every head will be responsible for crippled swings and disillusioned golfers. Tact is an invaluable asset in teaching. Some novices will thrive under a system of abuse which will help to stir them to greater efforts; while the more sensitive will shrink from an unkind criticism. The instructor will do well if he learns at a glance the particular type with which he has to deal, without resorting to maladroitness experiments. Now that the onus has been

placed upon the unwilling shoulders of the coach himself, I will proceed to emphasise a few essential principles.

The chief trouble that the late beginner is likely to experience will be found in the use of his wrists. It may, however, reassure him to learn that the less he tries to use them the better will be the result. I will endeavour to explain what I mean. There is a very simple, straightforward shot that is played with a mashie from about fifty yards from the hole. The idea is not to put stop on the ball, nor yet to impart especial run after it strikes the ground, but to hit the ball with the natural loft of the club, to follow through easily, and to trust to a moderately high flight with about twenty yards of run. This stroke is played with almost stiff wrists, since there is no attempt either to flick the ball into the air or drive it downwards in a low direction. And this is the principle which the beginner should adopt when he has a driver in his hand for the first time. Theorists would have us believe that the first movement of the club head is brought about by a smart bend of the left wrist. How this notion came about it is difficult to conceive; but it is popular enough, and it will take plenty of instantaneous photography yet to convince the world at large that the club shaft and arms move back together in a straight line for the first foot of the back swing. With very few exceptions the great players do this to a man. An immediate bend of the left wrist at once disarranges the swing and breaks the backward movement into two pieces. The left wrist only begins to bend after the hands have roughly reached the height of the shoulders. What is more, the bigger the bend, however late it has commenced, the harder it will be to control the club in the down swing. Which

leads me to my first point: cultivate a short back swing. The beginner will not regret this limitation. He will hit the ball as far as he would have done in his inspired moments with a long swing, and he will find that the extra control reaps its due reward, because he will the more often discover his ball on the fairway.

A second point is also embodied in the illustrative mashie stroke just described. During its execution, body movements in an upward, downward, or sideway direction should have all been eliminated. The level turning of the shoulders was the only liberty allowed, and this was reduced to a minimum. And so it is with the driver. The sway and the lunge produce a sluggish movement of the arms instead of a decisive blow. The body may come forward slightly after the ball has been struck in order to assist the follow through, but until this has happened, the head, which after all controls the body, must remain in the same place, and the eye must be glued to the ball.

A failure to exercise proper control of the body and the head will be due in some measure to unsteady footwork and a loose action of the knees. The correct stance has been taken up, but the lifting of the heels during the various stages of the swing, and the necessary bend of the left knee in the course of the back swing are operations which will considerably affect the execution of the stroke. While the ball is being addressed both knees will be bent a fraction, and this, with a general stiffening of the backbone, will result in a position being taken up which corresponds in some measure to sitting on the edge of a very high chair. This fundamental bend of the knees will assist the first movement of the club in the back swing, which may then be undertaken without any further relaxation of the

left knee ; and it is only when about a quarter of the back swing is completed that a further bend of the knee will be required, in order to allow the top of the swing to be reached. The tendency with beginners, when this artificial movement is explained to them, is to buckle the left knee in an inward direction, thereby exaggerating the bend and rising at the same time upon the left toe. This only contorts the swing and makes the chances of recovering the proper position at impact especially difficult, and also renders the balance at the top of the back swing insecure. The complete bend of the left knee therefore should be in an outward direction, and should be turned back, at any rate, no farther than a position which allows the point of the knee to be directed towards the ball. But if the knee should be pointed even more in the direction of the hole than this, it will do no harm, and will have a good result in that it will not allow the left heel to rise more than slightly from the ground. In the meantime, during the back swing, the almost imperceptible bend of the right knee, which was insisted upon in the taking up of the stance, will not have altered. It will neither have straightened nor will it have sagged. The right heel will be firmly planted upon the ground until the ball has been struck, then it may lift slightly in order to conform with the follow through. At a stage half-way through the down swing there will be a perceptible bending of the right knee, which is purely instinctive, and it must be remembered that any exaggeration of this movement is highly dangerous ; it would lead to a disastrous ducking of the right shoulder and all its consequences. In a word, the movements of the legs should be reduced to a minimum.

When the back swing has been completed, the

beginner should not be in too great a hurry to deliver his blow, but should allow the speed of the club head to increase gradually until it nears the point of impact, when there should be a distinct quickening and a shove through, which will straighten out both his arms and compel the club head to strike the ball smoothly, yet firmly, without undergoing any check until something of a follow through is reached. All the while the right elbow should be kept close to the body, in this way insuring that the club is moving on an inward path. The right arm should never fly out during the down swing, and when this happens—and it is due chiefly to using the right hand too much—a slice will be the inevitable result. The right hand only comes in practically at impact, and up to that point its chief duty is to guide the club in the correct downward path. From this it will be seen that the left hand plays an important part in obtaining the necessary impetus before the ball is struck. It is indeed surprising to find that the weaker member should exercise such a strong influence in the stroke ; and it is probably due to the fact of beginners feeling that golf, like most games, necessitates a greater use of the right hand than the left, that they make at first such poor attempts to hit a golf ball truly and accurately.

As to the follow through, the sensation will be that of a push brought to the last stage of completion. There need be no studied effort to reach what may be called the picturesque finish, but the follow through should correspond in length to that of the back swing. The arms throughout the follow through should be kept as taut as possible until the inevitable reaction ensues, when they will bend a little in sympathy.

The frame of mind in which the pupil should

approach the shot with the driver is of importance. He should not try in the first place to hit the cover off the ball, but concentrate upon preserving the truth of his swing. His eye should be kept upon that part of the back of the ball which should be hit, and rather than attempt to hit this actual spot to the exclusion of all other ideas, it would be better if he should regard it as an incident in the course of his swing. The one precaution which he should adopt will be to make sure that he gets down to the ball ; in other words, to hit the ground under the ball instead of falling into the error, to which all beginners are prone, of hitting the ball hard on top.

The novice will be well advised if he practises his swing at the expense of the daisies on his lawn or elsewhere in preference to much practising with the golf ball itself. He will thus learn to consider, chiefly, the accuracy of his swing ; and the sight of a daisy will disturb his equilibrium less than if an intimidating golf ball claims his attention.

Iron play in its turn will loom large in the mind of the beginner. It will appear fraught with hazardous possibilities. No tee will be present to render moral assistance. The ground on which the ball lies will seem either interspersed with jagged worm-casts, or to offer a surface as unsympathetic as unhewn granite. But the situation is not entirely desperate. There are but two things to avoid—hitting the ground behind the ball, and hitting the ball without touching the ground. The solution is this : to strike the ball first and the ground afterwards. The swing itself may be identical with that of the driver, with the provision that it shall describe a smaller arc. The grip of the left hand should be more pronounced than in the shot

with wood, and the delivery of the blow must be firmer, more of a punch than the push which was characteristic in the use of the driver. The follow through, therefore, will be shorter and more decisive, and, at the finish, there should be little or no slackening of the grip with either hand. The weight must remain more on the left foot, although the tendency to fall forward must be rigidly checked. Avoid any inclination to lift the ball into the air, and make up your mind that the whole conception of the blow must be that it is delivered in a downward direction, as if your intention were to drive the ball into the ground through an oblique tunnel in a line towards the hole. Do not be afraid of this seemingly irrational attitude. The loft on the face of the club will save you. Even if you feel that by employing this method you are reducing the lifting quality of the club face, you will actually find that there is an ample loft remaining to allow of the ball leaving the club in an upward direction.

In using the mashie the pupil may regard the stroke more simply. All he need do will be to swing naturally, yet keeping his wrists stiff. And above all let him aim at the correct strength to place his ball alongside the hole. In playing for accurate strength rather than mere direction he will, in all probability, cut his losses the more successfully than if he indulges his natural inclination merely to hit the ball straight for the pin and trust to Providence for the proper length of the shot. But I would recommend him to keep foremost in his mind the intention of pitching his ball short of the hole with a sufficiency of run to complete the journey. As in iron play, he should refrain from taking the ground behind the ball and concentrate on hitting crisply.

In cases where an intervening bunker leaves only a small space of ground on which to pitch and run, a different procedure will have to be employed. In a position of this sort the value of a mashie niblick will be appreciated. With its assistance the ball may be lofted without undue effort, and, after all, it is worth remembering that it is the high shot which produces the least run. The beginner had better leave alone for the present any idea of playing with back spin. Let him play the shot as simply and easily as he may, taking especial care that he avoids any suspicion of jab in the stroke.

Out of the rough a mashie niblick is a useful weapon. Its extra weight and lofting qualities should be sufficient to extricate the ball out of anything short of an impossible lie. Brute force is a valuable asset in work of this kind, and it should be left to the power in the arms and an upright swing to produce the desired result. The player should take care to remain firm on his feet and launch the club head under the ball with all the force of which he is capable.

Out of bunkers also the mashie niblick can be relied upon. The beginner would be well advised to avoid at first too delicate a method in his attempt to lift the ball out of the sand. He should fix his attention firmly on a spot two or three inches behind the ball, and concentrate solely upon burying the club head in the sand at that exact spot, and wrenching it through as decisively as he can. For every shot of this description he should take a full swing, however distant or near at hand the hole may be, and he will find that it is possible to regulate the distance the ball will travel by the amount of sand which he takes behind the ball with his club.

On putting it will not be necessary to say any-

thing here. A later chapter is devoted to the explanation of the various methods which may be employed in this most difficult department of the game. They will be equally applicable to the needs of the expert or the beginner. Anyone who has a natural aptitude for putting may be gratified one day to find that he can outputt a better golfer. What is wanted is a neat touch and a cool head. Possessed of these, a player should have no difficulty in acquiring the art.

In golf there are probably more than seven deadly sins, but those with which the beginner will be chiefly concerned are best known as the Slice, the Pull, the Top, and two especially unfortunate habits known as the Socket and the Scloff. We will deal with these in the order in which they are given.

The Slice is caused by drawing the club head from right to left across the direction of the stroke. The ball when it is hit is inclined to travel from the heel towards the toe of the club, and this is brought about in several ways. The right shoulder in the down swing may be coming round too early, the right elbow at the same time may have left the right side, endeavouring to play an excessive part in the stroke.

Probably the best way to correct this tendency will be to hold the left side firm, and not only to forbid the left hip to relax and fall away, but compel it to point in the direction of the hole at the finish of the swing. To assist in this, it may be found profitable to bring the right foot back, so that there is a greater pressure on the right instep, which will prevent the body from slewing round. At all costs attempt to swing as close to the body as possible when coming down, and after the ball is struck to follow through in an outward direction.

The Pull is a fault which most confirmed slicers regard with jealous eyes, but if it has become thoroughly ingrained in the composition of the golfer's swing it will be just as persistent and perhaps harder to correct than the slice. The beginner, however, will rarely discover that the pull is his besetting sin, and if by any chance he should find that the flight of his ball is inclined to curve to the left, he need not be too apprehensive on that score.

He can counteract this error by making up his mind to hit the ball as much on the heel as possible, by allowing his right shoulder complete freedom in the down swing, and by preventing the toe of the club from turning over at impact.

Topping is caused by lifting the head and body in the back swing, which will more often than not result in complete failure to recover the proper and more lowly position at the moment when the ball is struck. It may also be caused by lifting the body just before impact, and this is generally due to the desire to watch the result of the shot too soon. In other words, the player is taking his eye off the ball before it is actually struck.

The beginner, if he suffers from this complaint, must make up his mind to get under the ball at all costs ; and to do this, must keep his backbone stiff and immovable, and swing evenly with his arms straightened. Furthermore, he must not try to hit too hard or indulge in any excessive movements, which may lead him to lose control of his club head or his body.

Next on the list comes Socketing with iron clubs. It is a complaint which has reduced more golfers to desperation than any other fault. So persistent is it in the case of iron clubs that before now it has driven

even fervent lovers of the game to forsake the links, since golf for them has become nothing but a succession of unhappy rounds, devoted entirely to the attempt to correct this pernicious habit. So disastrous does a shot struck in this manner appear that at first sight it seems inexplicable. The ball will fly straight out to the right or will proceed along the ground in the same direction. If the club is examined the paint mark of the ball will be seen on that portion of the club which connects the face with the pipe.

In order to prevent what may develop into a frequent happening in the future, immense determination is at once needed. Go to some secluded part of the links with half a dozen balls and a mashie. Play two or three shots, and if the socket stroke recurs proceed at once to get to the root of the matter. First of all stand well back on the heels, straighten the arms in the address and hollow the back. Then play an easy shot, concentrating only upon a true swing with as much absence of body movement as possible. Take care not to push out the hands just before hitting the ball, make sure that the weight is not coming on to the toes in the down swing, and follow through without checking the club head. It is inadvisable to attempt to play any shot which is not absolutely straight forward either with an iron or a mashie while this fault is in evidence. Attempt neither to loft the ball too much into the air nor to impart anything in the nature of back spin. Play the plain shot and swing so slowly at first that it would seem almost possible to watch the club face strike the ball with that part of the blade which is remote from the socket.

Scalffing may be defined as a floundering blow in which the club head meets the ground several inches

behind the ball, and there wastes its energy. In the meantime the face of the club has been deflected and the stroke hopelessly missed.

It proceeds from the ducking of the body in the feeble intention of at any rate lifting the ball into the air. Both shoulders should be held up and kept as level as possible. Make a more manly effort to play the stroke, avoiding any looseness or indecision in the swing, and push the club head through the ball. If the arms are held straighter it will assist towards the correction of this error, and the wrists will assume greater control. A slack method of playing will allow many faults to creep into the swing unnoticed, until finally the day of reckoning arrives and the beginner, in his endeavour to regain his form, will be compelled to make a comparatively fresh start.

With these instructions the chapter comes to an end, and whether or not the remarks in it may prove of some assistance, they will have served their purpose if the beginner has concluded that golf is a game in which thoroughness and personal examination are essential. To a certain extent he may rely upon the ministrations of his professional, but his progress will be slow indeed if he does not learn to know his own game so intimately that, whenever any unwelcome peculiarities become evident in his shots, he has that knowledge at his disposal which will enable him to recognise the particular nature of his error, and apply the means by which it may be best counteracted.

Golf is no light-hearted game. It will cause the beginner months of anxiety, but it will nevertheless give him a fresh interest in life. The business man will return to his office convinced that his labours on the links have been time well spent. Country air and the

absorbing influence of the game will have acted like a tonic upon his nerves. He will feel better for his two rounds a day, and he will have walked many miles without realising it.

One final note of warning must be struck. Beginners are inclined to imagine that their progress in the game will be at once noticeable. This is a delusion which will have a dispiriting effect if it is not remembered that golf is as difficult a game as any that exists. It will be an exceptional case if, after two years, the beginner has reduced his handicap to single figures ; and it is because so many newly recruited golfers fail to grasp this fact that they either go from bad to worse in their play or give the game up without a sufficient trial. The improvement should be gradual ; but it will be steady enough if patience is exercised and if the player refuses to be upset by those recurring misfortunes which are inevitable when he is off his game. After all, intelligent practice in the long run makes perfect, and golf is no exception to the rule.

CHAPTER IV

TEE SHOTS : PARTICULARLY FROM THE LADIES' POINT OF VIEW

1. *The Swing*

THE shot off the tee may be said to be the favourite shot in golf. To strike a ball from the centre of the wooden club and to see it sailing at the desired trajectory down the centre of the fairway is to experience a sensation of undiluted pleasure. The feeling of the deep satisfying resistance from the wood passes through the nerves to the centre and leaves a delightful sense of power applied in the best possible manner. The slightest mishitting entirely spoils the smoothness of the rhythm, and introduces an unpleasing harshness. But a clean-hit drive is a piece of pure artistry : 'Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth.' It not only gratifies the performer, but delights the spectator. There is nothing that the crowd loves more than a long hitter who is also a fine swinger. The whole action is beautifully co-ordinated ; and the sound of the crack which accompanies the well-executed shot supplies the finishing touch of brilliance. Curiously enough, it is quite possible to recognise, even at a distance, the peculiar sound of the impact which characterises one or two men players we could mention. The sight of the ball in the air is succeeded by a report like that of a pistol-shot. Sometimes the sound is

deeper, and is more of a crash. It depends very largely upon whether the ball is sent away with something of an enormous flick, or, as was once remarked with regard to James Braid's smiting, the smash of a steam-hammer on a marble. But these cases only occur when the ball is struck perfectly cleanly off the tee, as only the very best can strike it. With a vast number of players you never hear this fine sound of impact at all; they either take the ground in their stroke or at least an excess of sand. And what a difference this incidental touch makes! It goes to prove that the tee shot, perfectly played, is not as easy as it looks. With the ball enjoying more than a perfect lie, it would appear that the shot would present the minimum of difficulty: yet in many ways and to many people it is the most difficult of all. It is the commonest thing to see the greatest players playing shots from the fairway up to the hole with monotonous precision, and yet to find them at times strangely crooked from the tee. Probably two chief reasons exist for this rather perplexing fact. It is quite possible that the ball, when it is teed up, free from direct contact with the ground, is peculiarly sensitive to various spins which arise from any divergence from a perfectly true swing; and to support this theory, it is a noticeable fact that some players, when they find themselves hitting their drives amiss, discard the tee altogether and play the ball directly off the ground. The contact may have a steadying effect on the stroke. Another reason may be that the harder a player hits the more he accentuates the slightest error in striking. A lady, or a man with only moderate length, may be rarely in trouble simply because they do not get far enough to matter. But prolong the direction line of their

shots, and they may soon find themselves in very serious difficulties. It follows, therefore, that the harder the hitting, the more necessary it becomes to obtain a mastery over the principles of accurate driving. The balance of the body is of the utmost importance. When hard hitting is to be done, there is the highest degree of possibility that the body may be shaken out of its position, with the consequence that the swing gets out of adjustment and the ball is not struck with the club in the same position or at the same angle as it occupied during the address.

It is with the object of building up a system of firm body control, which will permit of the greatest velocity of swing, that any practical remarks about driving are primarily concerned; and with that intention, some few preliminary details must be gone into.

The first things to consider are questions of grip and stance. There is no golden rule about the way you should grip the club. What is called the Vardon grip presents—so far as I can see—no necessary difficulty to a lady; although it is generally said to require a stronger set of wrists and fingers than ladies are supposed to possess. It certainly adds an evenness to the hold upon the club; the hands are closer together, and this enables them to work in greater harmony. All that is required is that the right hand should be brought up so closely to the left that the little finger of the right hand rides upon the forefinger of the left hand, which has the effect of placing the left thumb under the base of the right thumb and in this way helps to join the two hands together. The right thumb itself I prefer to keep on the shaft straight down it; while the right forefinger comes immediately under its extremity,

permitting a tight pressure on the shaft at this point. Throughout this grip it is the fingers that do the work, and the palms of the hands exercise as little control as possible. But, as I suggested, there is a wide freedom of choice. The grip with the right hand separately below the left seems to work equally well with many of the finest players ; so let the lady prove by experiment which method is the more natural and comfortable in her own case. I would advise no constrained position of the hands, neither of them lying too far over the top of the shaft, nor too far under. The backs of the two hands should tend to be more or less opposite to each other on either side of the shaft. If it comes at all naturally to the player to keep the back of the left hand turned over, showing on the top of the club, it is a point to cultivate. It has the considerable advantage of tending to keep the left arm straight. The tension of the left elbow is increased by it, and this helps to prevent the crumpling up of the left arm, which leads to loss of power and accuracy. But to most people this position is very unnatural and can even be painful, so that it would be unwise in any way to insist upon its adoption. Only let it be emphasised, that any device which a player can make use of with the intention of increasing the straightness of the left arm and the consequent swinging directly and freely from the left shoulder, is invaluable. Older players, owing to a natural stiffness of the upper muscles of the left arm, can scarcely hope to attain to the ideal in this respect, but they should certainly aim at doing so to the best of their ability. It is also necessary that the hands should be kept low in the address. This brings the body into the correct angle of position leaning over towards the ball, with the weight kept

well back on the heels. If the hands are held high, the body becomes too upright ; therefore let the grip accommodate itself to the low position of the hands, and be careful that the angle of the body is maintained and not straightened out during the back swing.

The stance should be a firm one. The feet should be placed as wide apart as is convenient, in order to restrict excessive body movement as much as possible. Remember that the primary object to be kept in view is that all questions of positions and movements are concerned with the business of hitting the ball, and for this firmness is above all necessary. This may appear to be an obvious remark, but in actual practice it is no unusual occurrence for players to be so occupied with a series of positions which are outlined in their minds that they are apt to lose sight of the fact of the ultimate object, that the ball must be firmly hit. The sense of firmness—something solid to hit against—must be felt from the start. In taking back the club, press upwards from the front portion of the left foot, so that the left side feels like a straight rod right up to the left shoulder. It is very important that the left shoulder must at the same time resist the press-up and not allow itself to be pushed out of place. There must be no yielding to this pressure. In this way you get the tension between the shoulder and the foot which establishes the necessary firmness of the left side.

To avoid possible confusion, I will describe in elementary terms what I consider to be the simplest and most straightforward type of swing. In going back there are two movements of the arms. The first movement is to take the club head back until the left arm is quite straight and horizontal—just

as if it were the spoke of a wheel without any bend in it—and at this position the toe of the club is pointing straight up into the sky. The second movement is to lift the toe and carry it over the shoulder towards the hole, with the final result at the top of the swing that the toe of the club is pointing directly downwards towards the ground. The point I wish particularly to make is that the wrists are not being told to do anything on their own account ; they must not turn loosely away in either of these two movements. Does this action of arms and wrists feel comfortable ? In all probability not particularly so. And this possible feeling of restraint is the reason why it is not more often done. As you will probably discover, the wrists will not naturally of their own free will keep the club head in the positions pointed out. They will display an inclination to let the control of the club head relax at the top of the swing ; and this inclination is one which it is well to resist. The golf swing is not intended to represent the acme of comfort.

All this time there has been a strain going on against the left side. But your position at the top of the swing is at any rate firm, and only waiting for its release. You are in a good position from which to come down well. Having kept firm so far, do not relax the arms in coming down. Let the downward swing be a big sweep without any cutting of corners. If you kept a straight left arm going up, you avoided a cutting off of any portion of the full curve ; so do not spoil it by any crumpling up of the arms in coming down. And here at this point let me say something about the follow through. For as long as possible after hitting the ball the club head should follow on a line in the direction of the hole, and I would ask you,

as you are coming down, to look ahead in your mind at this line which it is essential to follow. If you do not adopt this principle of looking ahead, the chances are that you will not get on the right line at the critical moment. Unless you make your plans in advance, you will find it will be too late when the moment for hitting the ball arrives, and the thing will be done in a hurry. You will be inclined to make the best of a bad business, and confusion will follow. It is a straight line starting six inches behind the ball and continuing for twelve inches beyond it along which the endeavour should be to keep the club head moving. This may not be particularly easy, but at any rate the most successful way I know of accomplishing it is to map out your plans a fraction of time before putting them into execution in the way I have suggested.

You will notice that I have described what is called the upright swing. It is the particular style in which I put my faith, and for that reason I shall confine myself to its description. I do not for a moment wish to say that most excellent results cannot be obtained by the flatter variety of swing, in which the club head starts back round the right leg; but its particular advocates are better qualified to describe it. The main reasons of my preference for the upright swing are that the style is more adaptable to the various golfing strokes, and also more certain. Fewer shots are likely to be dropped, and the ball can be got into the air with greater facility.

Ladies may be advised to favour a long swing. Their strength, as a rule, is not superabundant, so that the cultivation of an accurate full swing—if it is kept firm and controlled—will give the finer sense of rhythm and also greater distance. I would also go so far as



The Drive : Stance.



The Drive : Back swing—first movement.





The Drive : Back swing—completion of second movement.



The Drive : Finish.

to say that a suspicion of sway in their swings may not be an altogether bad thing. If they can adjust it properly — and many do quite successfully — it certainly lends distance to the stroke. But the same leniency cannot be conceded to anything in the nature of a lift in the back swing. Any upward and downward motion is fatal. If anyone has any doubt as to what I mean, let them try the following experiment. Stand with the feet rather close together. As the club goes back, lift the chin two or three inches so that the body is appreciably straightened. Get well on to the toe of the left foot, and turn the left heel so that the sole of the foot faces towards the hole. From the top of the swing, bring down the club on to the ball and you will find you have to duck downward to do it. This is the body movement, the lifting up and the ducking down, which must be avoided at all costs. Do you not feel how floppy the whole stroke is, and how all the force and power have been dissipated ?

If you have been successful in keeping the club head along that vital eighteen inches, which includes the spot where the ball was lying, the slice or hook should not have made their appearance. But accidents are very likely to happen ; and perhaps the most common error in golf is committed when the club head reaches a position outside the line of direction before the ball is reached. Imagine that this has happened, that in coming down the club has swung outwards in too wide a curve. The club head must come inwards towards the ball, or otherwise the ball will be missed altogether ; and then one of two things is bound to occur. The club head comes across the line instead of proceeding along its length : if the club head is turned inwards at the moment it meets the ball, some-

thing very like a hit to leg at cricket follows, and the ball flies away to the left. If, on the other hand—as is more frequently the case—the face of the club is turned outwards or is square to the line at the moment of impact, a side spin is given to the ball, which, being sliced, curls away to the right. Ladies are especially inclined to slice or cut the ball; and if they understand exactly how it comes about, they are some distance towards finding the cure. I would advise them not so much to try to keep inside the line of direction coming down before they reach the ball—this would probably cause them to strike the ground heavily—but to concentrate on keeping the club steadfastly moving along the line of follow through. It amounts really to a feeling of almost hitting outwards.

The pull may be considered on the whole as a good fault as faults go, and need not be regarded as seriously as the slice. It frequently is a transitory fault which has a happy knack of curing itself. It also has its peculiar merits; and it is at any rate a cleaner-hit shot than the slice, running well after it pitches. What is taking place is that the club head is crossing the true line of direction from a position inside the line to one beyond; and it may be regarded as a special characteristic of the flatter swing. It is also very likely to occur when the club head is travelling on a circular path, coming down round the right leg and passing on round the left side. The remedy is best found by keeping the club head on the straight line, and if this is done the wished-for improvement should naturally follow.

No golfing phrase is more often heard than that of 'keeping the eye on the ball.' People have even

instructed their caddies to recite the magic words at appropriate intervals. But however valuable the advice may be, its application may be partly misunderstood. During the upward swing there can scarcely be said to be any temptation to take the eye off the ball. The swing must be very crooked if this occurs, and probably no amount of eye-strain would put it right. But at the moment when the ball is about to be hit, the eye is undoubtedly very anxious to look for results. In its anxiety it is inclined to move too fast forward in advance of the club; so that without being fully conscious of it, a player can quite easily be looking some distance ahead before the ball has even begun to move. The eye looking forward has disturbed the position of the head and with it the position of the whole body, with the inevitable result of an inaccurate stroke.

In concluding this section, the swing which has been already described can be confidently recommended to any player who has hitherto found the swing a perplexing and unsatisfactory problem. It is a method which is also quite effective for cleek and iron shots, where a perfectly plain and accurate stroke which has some run on it is desired with these clubs.

2. *Some Principles*

The errors of the swing which find their expression in pulling and slicing have been lightly touched upon, so far as the movement of the arms are concerned with the arc of the swing. Regarded from another point of view, these errors owe their origin to the infringement of the principle of body balance. Unless the arms take upon themselves unnecessary responsi-

bilities, they should automatically follow the central movement of the body. If once the problem of the correct balance is successfully solved, the chances of the swing working out in a proper manner become infinitely greater. Get the balance right first and the rest should follow in the ordinary course. It is the action of the body, the part played by the shoulders and the legs, which govern the initial principles. The arms and wrists are the secondary elements of the swing.

An excellent model to illustrate the principle may be seen in the windmill, as representing in an inanimate form a perfectly firm central structure riveted to the ground, with its arms flying round at full extension in a slow but beautifully regular movement.

The windmill, which has a solid base, is not confronted with the difficulties confronting a human being, who has to carry the weight on two feet, closely connected with a pair of loose shoulders. The complexity of balance at once becomes evident. Weight transference must be so managed that the central structure remains firm; and if it gets out of adjustment the troubles begin. Some years ago the importance of this problem agitated golfing circles to such a degree that a weighing machine was constructed to record the exact weight transferred to either leg at every portion of the swing, and leading players were invited to swing a club in the position of the Colossus of Rhodes, each foot on a separate weight recorder.

In the main it must be a good rule to keep the weight as equally as possible on both feet. If an exaggerated transference on to the right foot and then on to the left is indulged in, the player may very well

be 'rolling about like an old ship.' The weight, however, must of necessity be continuously shifted, and it is valuable to note a consequence of its action.

If, for example, the weight goes back on the right foot, the right shoulder is 'pinned' by it, and you will find that it becomes as rigidly fixed as is the foot itself. And what is of equal importance is the fact that when the weight is shifted from the right foot the right shoulder is unloosed and regains its freedom. This principle applies as a matter of course to both feet and both shoulders. Upon the correct transference of weight from the one foot to the other, and the consequent effect upon the shoulders, particularly depends the correct timing of the shot and the preservation of the truth of the swing.

Much has been written about the slice and its cure. The various forms of advice are rarely satisfying. The ordinary 'tip' generally only touches the fringe of a fault; it only scratches the surface. It is best to go back to the root of the evil and to see if it does not originate, as it is almost sure to do, in a faulty balance; in other words, it is advisable to observe where the weight transference has gone wrong. When a slice takes place, the weight has gone forward, and over the top of the ball. The phrases 'dropping the right shoulder' or 'falling in on the ball' indicate what has happened. The right shoulder has been unpinned too soon, before the moment when the left foot should have been ready to take the weight over and pin the left shoulder in its turn. How can one put the remedy into actual practice? Granted that the principle is understood, it is quite easy for anyone with a golfing imagination to find out a particular cure. I would suggest one or other of the following:

(1) Not to make the hit from the top—that is, from the right shoulder—but to wait until you have had time to recover the club from its horizontal position. Keep the right shoulder pinned a fraction longer.

(2) To keep the right knee back, both when you are swinging up and when you are swinging down.

(3) Not to let the right heel rise too quickly. Do not lift it until the club head is practically on the ball.

Each of these suggestions has the same end in view, regarded respectively from the position of shoulder, knee, or foot. The object is not to let the plane of the swing get tilted obliquely immediately the down swing commences.

The converse of this process has happened with the pull, which is much more likely to creep in when the swing is flat. The weight has been kept behind unduly, and there has been too great a falling back from the ball. The right shoulder has been pinned too long. If this is the cause, it will not be difficult to devise a satisfactory antidote.

These weight transferences are frequently almost imperceptible. They should flow into one another without abruptness, and when they do this with a natural smoothness the stroke has attained that rhythm which every self-respecting golfer seeks to acquire. It is only when something has gone wrong, and it becomes necessary to discover the causes with a view to correction, that one need inquire whether the weight is passing in its proper order. The investigation, however, will generally furnish the clue. If it is kept in mind that the arms will naturally follow the shoulder movements, the recovery of the correct action of the body will restore the accuracy of the swing.

With the object of obtaining as much stability as

possible, we have already recommended a wide stance to ensure a firm grip of the ground. Not so wide that there is a strain on the knees ; but wide enough. Let the stance also be square to the direction. It is well to have the feeling of the weight distributed downwards from the waist and firmly riveted to the ground. The hips should be felt to be sinking rather than rising. A narrow stance gives the feeling that the hips are too high, that a wind would find the player too high in the air and liable to be blown over. The back and shoulders can be held lightly. It is the firmness of the lower structure which is essential. When great power is put into a stroke, the strain of resistance is so intense that some form of muscular control is not only needed but should be actually felt. With a narrow stance there is considerably greater comfort ; but this may easily lead to excessive freedom of footwork and consequent instability.

Our friend the windmill had no need to pivot. He stood squarely to the breeze. But the human body must be pivoted. It has to turn in order to allow the arms to swing round the shoulders. The feet remain upon the ground in the same places, but they must give to a certain extent. In the back swing the left knee bends towards the ball, or even forward of that position. The right knee straightens and falls back, and remains straightened until the moment of striking, when it comes round quickly, bringing in the right shoulder with it. Usually the left heel is lifted in this preliminary movement. This is not, however, absolutely necessary. As a matter of fact, it is an idiosyncrasy of mine that I scarcely lift the left heel off the ground. For some reason this has always been natural to me ; the bend takes place between the left ankle

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and the ground, and when the right knee straightens there is, as it were, a lock of the two knees, which seems to distribute the weight more evenly between the two feet and confirm the feeling of steadiness.

In the more usual form of pivoting, the left knee turns inwards ; there is a turn on the left toe, and the weight tends to go back more definitely on to the right leg, in which case greater care must be taken to maintain the rhythm of the stroke by waiting until the precise moment arrives, when the weight is transferred forward. The main thing to remember, in whichever form of pivoting is adopted, is that any excessive movement of the legs should be avoided, because unnecessary freedom of foot-work will only confuse the balance of the weight and render it difficult to recover the successive positions of the body, upon which all correct timing depends.

There are two other points which demand notice : the speed of the club head during the swing and its significance ; and finally a consideration of what commonly comes under the heading of wrist-work, so far as the full shot is concerned.

At first sight the angle at which the shaft of the driver is addressed to the ball would not appear to be a matter of great importance. As a general rule the club is placed behind the ball at right angles to the line of direction. But in some cases you often see players laying the shaft at more or less of the angles represented by the sides of the letter A. At one time I addressed the ball off the tee with my hands well behind the club head, which was adversely criticised by a well-known exponent of the game. He pointed out that almost all the best players kept their hands in front of the club head both in the address and also at the moment of

striking. Now this is contrary to the orthodoxy of the books, which generally preach the doctrine that the club head must always lead the way both in the back swing and in coming down. But instantaneous photography clearly proves the opposite. The hands take back the club, in the first instance, simultaneously, and in coming down the straight left arm pulls down the club at something like an angle of 55° . The hands continue to keep well in front, and it is only at the last moment that the club head is torn through at a terrific speed. In fact, it is apparent that when the ball is actually struck the swing has not yet reached its lowest point.

If you think of a motor-car coming down a dip in the road as hard as it can go, it is fairly obvious that it reaches its maximum speed at the bottom of the hill, and instantly begins to slacken directly the uphill incline is commenced. The same thing happens in the golf swing. The speed increases gradually from the top, and develops until the pace is at its hottest at the lowest point in the arc of the swing. When the club head has passed this point in its curve, something in the nature of an uphill journey commences, and the pace must inevitably tend to die away.

It is rightly maintained by the best authorities that in a full shot the club head should be travelling at its fastest immediately after, and not before, the ball has been struck; and this means that impact must take place before the club head has reached the lowest point of its swing. It engages with the ball before it gets there, and carries it through the moment of highest velocity before they part company. It therefore follows that if the club head is in advance of the hands when it meets the ball it will have commenced

its upward path and is already losing speed. On the other hand, when the hands, however slightly, are in front of the club head, the ball is struck before the downward journey is entirely completed, and it enjoys the fullest velocity of the club head. You will notice a similar happening in a correctly played iron shot when the injunction to take turf after the ball is carried out; and this is the reason that a scooped-up shot with an iron club is weak and unsatisfactory. But it may be urged that turf is not to be taken with a wooden club. Certainly not: there is no occasion to do so, because it must be remembered that there is a considerable difference between the playing of the two shots. The head of an iron club descends at a steeper angle, and reaches the bottom of its curve in the ground after the ball has been struck; whereas the curve of a swing with a longer-shafted wooden club is of a wider nature, and contains a considerably flatter base. It also has this advantage that if you aim at this principle of playing you are at any rate safely on the side of not having wasted the most effective speed of the swing; and the minute differences in this matter may mean a great deal.

The practical application of this principle is bound up with what is generally known as 'delayed wrist action.' This action undoubtedly has an immense amount to do with that concentration of power which enables unusual distances to be obtained. If ever the secret of big hitting can be localised, it is here. In previous pages the importance of not hitting from the top of the swing has been emphasised. To refer once again to the analogy of a motor-car plunging down a hill, this delayed action can be grasped if you imagine that the downhill is made as long as possible, and that

all the reserve power of which the engine is capable is kept back until the car has descended at least half way. Then the accelerator would be pushed home, and the speed would reach its maximum limit by means of this last desperate spurt. In the case of the down swing of the golf club, the pace should be gradual in its first movements, and increased very perceptibly, yet evenly, until the club head meets the ball. This can only be done by refusing to allow the wrists to recover their normal straightness until as late as possible. The left arm pulls down all the while, maintaining the tension of the bend in the left wrist until the very last moment arrives, when it becomes imperative, for the purpose of hitting the ball at all, that the straightening of the wrists and arms must take place. This will cause the left hand to be a little in front of the ball at impact; which will of necessity mean that at impact the swing will not have reached the very bottom of its curve. Not only is the straightening of the wrists delayed, but the turning of the shoulders is also left until the last moment. Everything is in fact held back for that last extra burst of speed which is in this way conveyed to the club head at the moment of vital importance.

Put quite simply, the practical value of this principle lies in the advice to the player that in exactly the same way as in the up swing he concentrated upon not hurrying the club head as it is withdrawn from the ball, but gradually to develop its speed on its way to the top of the swing, so in coming down he should naturally and almost unthinkingly keep the greatest power in reserve for the time when it is most wanted—the moment immediately before the ball is swept through the fastest portion of the swing's career.

A good deal of misconception exists in the matter of what is called 'wrist-work.' Some people imagine it to mean that the wrists should move about very freely, and to this end they commence to illustrate their conception of what their wrists are called upon to do by an extremely flexible waggle. Many of the greatest players indulge in this practice, but their waggles are not in any sense of the word intended to be miniature swings. I believe the process is largely mental; by which I mean that some little mental preparation is needed before starting an important stroke. You need to feel the rhythm of the motion, and to obtain a nice adjustment of mind and muscle before the important initial movement of the upward swing commences. And if a professional waggles freely he does not in any way repeat the waggle movements when he begins to swing back. The two actions are entirely different.

One of the most accurate driving mechanisms has no wrists at all. Golf-ball manufacturers use a machine for testing purposes, which consists of a club fixed in such a manner that, upon the release of a heavy weight, it swings round at a great speed in a mechanically perfect manner. It hits golf balls prodigious distances, and extraordinarily straight. But having nothing corresponding to human wrists, the face of the club is square to the line of direction throughout: there is no turning of it away at any point in the swing. The human wrist must unavoidably turn the face away at some time or other: if not, dislocation would take place at some point in a long swing. The question is: When should the wrist commence the turning movement? The method almost universally recommended some years ago was to begin turning the face away

from the line at once. There is no necessity for this ; and its dangerous consequence is that it tends to excessive freedom and unnecessary complication of wrist movement. As a rule, especially in shots with wooden clubs, the less work the wrists do on their own account the better. If you try the first movement in the swing as has been described, namely, keeping a straight left arm until it reaches a position half-way through the back swing, with the toe of the club head pointing skywards, you will have experienced the slight and gradual turn of the wrists which nature and the swing require. They have kept distinctly firm. In the second movement they are called upon to behave more firmly still, because the action is to keep the face of the club from this point to the top of the swing at the same angle ; and this permits of no give whatever. If, on the other hand, a method of free wrist-turning is adopted in going back, all this more complicated twist has to be unwound accurately in coming down to the ball, and if this unravelling is not done perfectly truly, the face of the club will not meet the ball dead-square to the line.

The wrists in the downward swing are asked to do nothing of themselves except to preserve their firmness : no ' turning of the key ' is needed. The conception of the movement is as of a perfectly simple and natural character. The hands go through without any complicated motions ; and the object is to hit the ball quite plainly, trusting to the truth of the swinging.

CHAPTER V

WOODEN-CLUB SHOTS THROUGH THE GREEN

THE modern rubber-cored golf ball with its exceptional length of carry, and the flattering manner in which it responds to the attentions of iron-faced clubs, has not only destroyed the characteristic features of those golf courses which were laid out for the purposes of the guttie ball, but has also reduced the art of wooden-club play through the green to comparative insignificance. Iron clubs in these days will hit the ball almost as far as wooden clubs, and will have the additional advantage that the direction of the stroke will be more easily controlled under normal conditions. The golfer, however, who has been accustomed to rely almost entirely on the use of his driving-iron through the green will find himself at a loss when the distance of his iron shot up to the hole side is stretched beyond his powers, owing to the pressure of a strong head-wind. It is then that the accomplished exponent of wooden-club play will score with the utmost frequency. With a brassie or a driver he may hit the low-raking shot which is beyond the capacity of any iron player against the wind. The soaring tendency which is imparted to the flight of an iron shot will, in a situation of this kind, assert itself in a dangerous manner. The player will discover that his ball, at some portion of its passage through the air, will be unable to withstand the buffet-

ing of the elements, that it will be frequently blown from the line, and will invariably fall short of the required distance. Upon seaside courses, when a driving gale often adds to the hardships of the game, the golfer who excels with his wooden clubs will rejoice in a certain advantage.

There is as great a dissimilarity in the shots which can be played with a driver, brassie, and spoon through the green as in the more obvious cases of the driving-iron, mid-iron, and mashie. The fact that so much variety can enter into the play with these wooden clubs is frequently overlooked, and the differences are well worth inquiring into.

The driver, in the first place, is generally supposed to be employed only when a fair expanse of teeing ground is provided, and a pinch of sand can be obtained from an adjacent teeing-box. All being well, the ball will be swept from an elevated position and dispatched to some point down the fairway. The driver will then be restored to a place of comfort in the golf bag, and there await the occasion of further activity upon the next tee. There are, however, holes which necessitate two shots, both of which will need to be the length of a full drive; and unless the wind—whatever there is of it—happens to be behind the player, there will be small chance of getting right home with a brassie. With a driver, however, provided there is no intervening bunker which may not be carried by a shot with a lower trajectory, the full distance can be obtained, not so much by a high shot, but by a perfectly true-hit ball that does not rise appreciably, and upon pitching runs for the rest of its journey.

By employing the driver for the second shot a remarkable distance, even against the wind, may be

obtained. The ball, however, must be lying cleanly on the course, and the player must have confidence in his club. Surprisingly enough, there seem to be some drivers especially adapted to work of this kind. It is hard to say whether it is because they have a little more loft on the face than is ordinarily found, or whether the build of the head is such that it fits pleasantly and comfortably upon the turf and thus renders it easier to pick up the ball from the bare ground. In any case, the practical answer may only be discovered by the player himself if he experiments with the various drivers at his disposal. Actually, I know of no other shot in golf which, successfully accomplished, can produce such a joyous thrill of satisfaction. In a wind the ball appears to fly as if it had been propelled from the barrel of a gun. No tempest seems to have the power to deflect it from the line, and its energy is unabatable.

The secret of long, clean hitting with wood is a combination of two or three things; and because it is impossible to consider during the course of the swing itself more than two simple rules at a time, it is necessary to practise each rule separately until the series of complicated movements becomes a harmonious whole. The first essential is of course timing, and it is the cultivation of this abstract ideal that chiefly disturbs the golfer's equilibrium. Correct timing cannot be accurately defined, yet it is at the root of all games, and distinguishes the good player from the indifferent. The time-honoured adage, 'Swing back slowly,' is the only advice which has an important bearing upon this abstruse matter. It has been found by experience to assist materially towards rhythmic swinging; but it has its limitations. The golfer whose down swing is

like a streak of lightning will find that a back swing which proceeds on its upward course in a manner reminiscent of the slow preliminary movements of a javelin thrower disintegrates the swing and detracts from its rhythm. He must therefore endeavour to conform relatively with the pace of the down swing when he lifts the club upwards. By this I do not mean he should snatch it back with a savage wrench, but should see that it moves swiftly, though evenly, up to that point from which the blow is delivered. That the whole swing should be conducted at a gradually increasing pace is a principle of huge importance; and the greater the speed of the club head at impact, the greater should be its impetus during the earlier stages. On the other hand, the swing that has less virility at impact in its composition should never be hurried in its first movements; a deliberate back swing must be acquired, or the actual hitting of the ball will develop into no more than a mere afterthought. The chief energy of the swing will have been expended too early, and cannot afterwards be concentrated at the moment when it is required.

A second essential to long hitting, and of equal importance, is discovered in the arc of the swing. The swing must be as wide as possible—that is to say, it must proceed as close to the ground for as long as possible both before and after the ball has been struck. The only method of effecting this big sweep of the club head is by determining to keep the left arm straight and stiff throughout. Then the arc will be as wide as man can make it. As an aid to steadiness in every department of the game, this rigidity of the left arm will be of the utmost assistance.

To proceed to another point, the left side from the

shoulder downwards to the foot plays its part in the powerful application of the club head upon the ball. There must be an incentive to all hard hitting, and in the golf stroke this incentive is supplied by the resistance of the hip and the upper portion of the left leg. If they together are imposed against the force of the swing, it adds impetus to its career. It is easy to understand that, if the left side allowed itself to be swung round at impact, there would be an inevitable flabbiness in the blow, and its decision would be impaired.

Let us consider then what is the position of the left side, which is calculated to insure that the resistance is as strong as possible. In the first place, it is not advisable that the left leg should be absolutely straight. A stiff leg will become subject to a weakening jar ; but if it is allowed to remain bent the merest fraction, yet like a spring braced to meet the shock, then should it stand firm and unshakable. Instantaneous photographs of leading players will usually show this almost imperceptible yet important bend of the knee at impact. They may also show that the left heel is sometimes just off the ground at the moment the ball is hit. This, however, is not such a grievous mistake as might be imagined at first sight, so long as the left side has not slackened. The left hip must be well forward, and should refuse to turn to any great extent in sympathy with the swing until the follow through has almost reached a finish. Furthermore, if the left shoulder flies round too readily it may render the good work accomplished by the hip and the leg ineffective.

The right hand in the stroke should not take effect too early ; it should come into force just before the club head meets the ball. This will be in a large measure instinctive, and the chief danger to be

encountered will be an immediate loosening of the grip of the left hand. This tendency must be sternly combated ; and it is best to concentrate chiefly upon the behaviour of the left hand during the swing rather than pay too much attention to the function of the right hand in hitting.

All these instructions naturally apply as much to a driver from the tee as through the green, and indeed to all shots where particular length is required. Great physical strength is not the primary cause of big hitting ; and so long as the golfer possesses strong forearms and wrists, the rest of his bodily development need not be exceptional, provided he acquires that instinctive knack of getting the resources at his disposal into the stroke at the critical moment.

Whether the golfer is a naturally long player or not, the mental attitude he should adopt in attempting to play his driver through the green will be identical in every case. There are, however, certain precautions that need to be taken. The reckless abandon which he found at times beneficial from the teeing ground should be curbed when he faces the ball lying uninvitingly upon solid earth. This is no moment for gay enthusiasms : life assumes a sterner aspect. The difference between failure and success hangs upon a blade of grass.

Stand a shade more behind the ball than is customary with the driver off the tee, and take up the line to the hole with exceeding care by means of the stance. Swing more easily than was your wont ; and feel that your left arm is guiding the club on its way down and that, at the psychological moment but not before, the right arm, with all its straightness and cautious strength, is guiding the club through to an effortless finish.

Imagine that the ball lies at that place in the curve of the swing which is the lowest point of its arc. Sweep the ball away and avoid any movement that is in the nature of a dig or an uncertain snatch. Finally, do not try and elevate the ball, since every driver has a shade of loft, however unapparent it may seem ; and, on the other hand, make no attempt to drive the ball in a downward direction. If everything goes well, the result will be the shot of your dreams.

Whereas the driver was used when it was required to gain extra distance, in spite of an unfavourable wind, the brassie should be taken on those occasions when the wind is behind, or when an exceptionally long stroke is not called for. The slightly more lofted face of the brassie will make a world of difference. The ball may be picked up more easily from an average lie, and the trajectory of the shots with this club will be considerably higher than those struck with the driver.

Down wind, a full brassie shot will dispatch the ball as far as, and probably farther than, an unteed stroke with a driver. The main difficulty that is encountered in playing with a following breeze is the inclination to sway in the direction of the hole, thus bringing about a top or, at the best, a low skimming shot that rises little higher than a man stands. This 'scuttering' type of stroke is especially irritating, since against the wind its advantages would have been considerable ; but in this instance it allows the friendly gale only a small opportunity of rendering any assistance. It is therefore most desirable that the loft of the club should be granted full play, and not reduced if it can be avoided. In order to effect this object, push off firmly with the left foot in the back swing, and feel your weight resting against the force of the wind, as it is directed upon your



Brassie Shot : Overlapping grip.



Brassie Shot : Stance.



Brassie Shot : Top of back swing.



Brassie Shot : Finish.



right shoulder. In the first stage of the downswing the shaft of the club encounters the resistance of the opposing blast, and for this reason takes more time than usual to reach that position in the swing where the club, the body and the head are blown forward on to the ball. Hold the body and the head stationary by exerting as strong a pressure of the right instep on the ground as possible. Do not let the back of the left wrist bend forward while the ball is being hit, but rather feel that you have succeeded in hollowing it against the direction of the shot. Suggest to yourself that the club head should reach the bottom of its swing just before the ball is struck, and try to imagine that it will then be forced upon the ball from that point. The swing itself in all brassie play is the same in every respect as that which is recommended in connection with the driver.

The wind that blows against the chest of the player, when he addresses himself to the ball, is the easiest wind in golf. It is a comforting influence, a corrector of faults. Most golfers are naturally slicers, but in this case it will be difficult to cut across the ball from right to left, because the strength of the wind will compel the shaft of the club to descend in a more inward path. Even if the ball is sliced, this same kindly breeze will reduce the curve of its flight and render the ultimate issue less harmful. Also, the golfer will be delighted to find that only by the most supreme effort can he rise upon his toes. He is held back firmly but respectfully upon his heels.

With the wind which is blowing against the player's back everything is reversed, and a seemingly innocent push-out develops into the most outrageous slice. The ball plunges head first into any trouble that may

be lying in wait upon the extreme right of the course. The golfer springs upon the point of his toes like a ballet-dancer. The inward path of the club head in the down swing is blocked by the rush of the wind. The player helplessly takes aim far away to the left of the line and leaves the rest to the tender mercies of the gods.

Nothing but the firmest resolution will overcome this push of the wind from behind. It is not within the golfer's capacity to rectify the disarrangements of the swing, if the wind is blowing excessively hard, by making up his mind to hit the ball truly. He will be compelled to adopt more drastic means. First of all, he should endeavour to play the stroke more with the left hand, taking care that its grip has tightened at impact, because it is a strange but indisputable fact that the left hand is most often the hand that brings off the pull. Let the back of the left hand be turned more round until the left thumb, if it lies down the shaft, rests behind the shaft. This gives the left hand more scope. Resist as far as may be the compelling force that pushes the player forward on to his toes by sitting well down to the shot and keeping the back stiff and taut. Aim a fraction to the left of the hole in order that drift may be taken into consideration, and play for that line. At the same time throw the club head well out after the ball has been hit by keeping the left arm as straight as lies within the player's power. Do not attempt to steer the ball by means of the right arm.

Against the wind the brassie shot should not become unduly alarming. When the distance is comfortably within the player's range, a useful stroke may be played. A clean straight shot into a stiff breeze will soar percep-

tibly, and run but little after it has pitched ; so that, if a bunker intercepts the line to the hole at a point near the edge of the green, a long carrying stroke is exactly what is required. The principles of powerful wooden-club play still hold good, although it may be found advisable to stand a little more in front of the ball, thus assisting to keep it down during the early portion of its flight. It may probably be discovered that a low follow through may help in this direction. A maxim that is often overlooked in all play against the wind emphasises the advice to swing as easily as possible, and to refrain from pressing at the ball in the down swing. This is an especially valuable doctrine, insomuch that the harder the ball is hit the more inclined it is to rise into the air early in its flight. This at times will even cause it to be blown back during its descent if the wind is strong enough. A shot played well within the strength of the golfer will start with a noticeably lower trajectory, and will only soar at the moment when it has all but reached its destination. Furthermore, this soaring quality, however delayed it may seem, reduces the degree of run on the ball so effectively that it will rarely overrun the green if it pitches anything short of the flag.

The weakest wooden club in the bag is the spoon ; yet it is in this very fact that its strength lies. More lofted than the brassie, it is a club of infinite resource. A cuppy lie will not find it wanting, and when the ball lies clean and well it is scarcely possible to fail in an attempt to elevate it into the air. Perhaps this is why cynics know it as 'the duffer's comfort.' As a matter of actual fact, however, there is no instrument in the playing of the game which responds so readily to what is recognised in golf as the artistic temperament.

To watch Herd or Duncan perform feats of genius with it will convince the sceptic that here is no ordinary weapon. The acquisition of a good spoon is a question of luck. Its material virtues may not be defined, and the detection of its latent possibilities is an instinctive gift. My own was acquired—permission, by the way, having been duly granted—from a dusty corner of a house where I was spending a week-end visit, and it has ever since been kept as a treasured possession in constant employment. Indeed, as a golf club it does not appear distinguished. The shaft is more bent than any first-class club which I have beheld. It has a rounded but battered sole. The face is cut back sharply, and the head is small rather than large.

The purposes of the spoon may be considered roughly to be suitable to two sets of conditions. It is a willing servant in adverse places. It is also a brilliant companion to the lover of fancy shots. As regards the former of these activities, its operations extend to recoveries from rough grass, heather, bents, and the like, when the lie warrants any such liberties being taken with it, and from those divot marks and small cavities in the fairway which a few golfers consider not only indifferent lies but the very worst of luck. Out of positions of this kind, all that is needed is the natural wooden-club swing, combined with something of a fierce dig. As in iron play, hit at the ball and not at the ground behind it. If everything conspires to success, the ball will be clipped out of its surroundings and driven a distance that would not ill-become a moderate shot with a brassie from a clean lie. The club must be directed downwards and rather inwards upon the ball ; the wrists are kept firm and the feet and body held under absolute control, with the weight perhaps a little more

forward than usual. Play the shot, if possible, off the heel of the club, and try to impart slice to the shot, all of which will assist in extricating the ball more abruptly from its retreat. If the rough where the ball is situated is of the tangled variety, which is wont to wrap itself round the shaft, pay special attention to wrenching the club at all costs through to a finish. In order to do this, a considerable application of the wrists will be needed at the last moment.

The more delicate shots with a spoon delight the specialist, but will in many cases remain a mystery to the golfer who may admire but cannot imitate. Generally, these strokes are played with a suspicion of cut which enables the ball to be more easily controlled. This to a certain degree may be cultivated; but the difficulty in spoon play lies not so much in the ability to play the shot itself as in the knack of recognising the shot when you are confronted with it during the course of a round. This is where the artist excels. He will discover a number of spoon shots, but will also detect a great many that do not exist. Roughly speaking, a spoon shot may be played up to a green which is built rather for a slice, or which, in other words, possesses an entrance which to the striker is set at an angle from left to right. The stroke may then be played for the left-hand corner of the green. The swing will be easy and a shade more upright than before, but during the downward movement allow the body to turn gradually to the left. Play right through the ball and finish low, so that the club head points half-way to the sky at an angle of forty-five degrees to the left of the hole. It is imperative that the right hand should exercise the chief control, and that the face of the club should be kept square to the line and not be

turned over at impact or afterwards more than can be helped. Then the ball should start even more to the left than the line which had been determined ; half-way in its flight it begins to curve towards the green, rising all the while, until finally it pitches on the edge of the green and trickles easily up to the hole side—let us hope, dead.

There is a similar variety of this stroke beloved especially by shot makers. The conditions are much the same as in the case of the shot which has been described ; except that, let us say, a deep bunker is placed a dozen yards in front of the pin, while disaster lies on the right, and a most important and appreciable breeze is blowing across the course from right to left. The stance will then be taken up as if the shot was intended to be directed straight at the hole. The stroke will be played in identically the same manner, with the exception that the ground is disturbed or grazed most distinctly in front of the ball. This will tend to give the ball a higher trajectory and a greater measure of back spin. It will commence a little to the left of the hole, rise steadily against the wind, yet ever gaining a fractional advantage over it until it hangs almost vertically above the pin, when it is, theoretically, intended to drop, like a plummet and a poached egg combined, upon the green itself—a pretty shot indeed, but certainly a refinement of the game.

If the hole may be approached from the right, it is easy enough to make use of a right-hand wind with a satisfactory result. All that should be attempted is a high shot without slice, the object being to push the ball towards that side of the green from which it is desired to approach the hole. The wind will begin to assert itself when the ball has reached the zenith of its



Spoon shot: cut up to the hole: finish.



flight, and should bring the shot round to the required portion of the green where the hole is situated. There will not be any exceptional run at the end of the shot, and the little there is will be therefore easily controlled. This is a safe stroke, because, if a suspicion of cut is applied, disaster need not necessarily follow. The effect will only be to hold the shot absolutely straight ; so that the final result will be that you may be left with a long putt from the right-hand edge of the green instead of a possible putt for a glorious three from somewhere near the hole. The worst that can befall a player in attempting this stroke is a sudden pull ; and it will be advisable that he should guard against this by refusing to allow the right hand to turn over at impact, and also by making up his mind to keep the face of his spoon as square to the line as he may throughout the stroke.

With the assistance of a left-hand wind it is pleasant to slice the ball up to the green when the hole is laid out to suit this round the corner method of play ; but there are situations when it will be necessary to hold the ball against the wind in much the same manner that was prescribed for the brassie shot upon similar occasions. The spoon, however, is an easier club with which to accomplish the feat, although the quick hook is liable to occur if too strenuous an effort is made to overcome the adverse conditions. Refrain from using the right hand overmuch, and concentrate upon swinging inside the ball. If it can be managed, hit the ball slightly off the toe of the club ; at any rate, make sure that the impact does not take place upon the heel. Finally, remember in all spoon shots of an ambitious nature, when subtlety and not brute strength is intended, that it is fatal to attempt more than a three-quarter

swing, and no more applied force than that which will allow the ball just to reach its destination.

It is conceivable that this chapter may convey a false impression. The reader may come to the conclusion that the advice given is of such an advanced character that in the interests of personal safety he would be wise to disregard it entirely. It must not be forgotten, however, that wooden-club play through the green is a specialised branch of the game, and that it is more often than not adopted by those whose predilection takes such a form, owing in many cases to an inability to make effective use of their iron clubs. But the need of a brassie will be experienced several times in the course of a round by every golfer except the longest hitters—and the instructions given in connection with the brassie and the driver are perhaps of value, unless they are wrongly interpreted to mean that every shot of this kind should be attempted in the manner we are accustomed to associate with what is colloquially known as a 'joy shot.' The devastating results of vaunting ambition are nowhere more evident in golf than in the use of the brassie. The watchword should be caution. With the possible exception of the spoon, the chief duty of wooden clubs is to pave the way for the next stroke ; so that, even if a brassie shot does not land the ball on the green, but has nevertheless placed it short of the objective and in such a position that a simple chip shot and a putt will do, the golfer will then have accomplished all that he set out to achieve—namely, to secure the hole in the correct figure at a minimum of risk.

CHAPTER VI

IRON APPROACHES

IN discussing wooden club play through the green the treatment of the subject might have appeared to be a departure into the realms of fancy and imagination, but in the case of iron play we find ourselves on a firmer footing. It was pointed out in the previous chapter that the long iron approach had superseded the more delicate operation with wood ; and indeed the driving-iron and the mid-iron constitute the golfer's chief means of attack. Professionals are past masters of iron strokes from all distances between the range of a cleek or a mashie, and it is in this sphere of action that their superiority to amateurs is often noticeable. The study of iron play may not promise a wide field for experiment, because the conviction will be always present in the mind that its intention is essentially practical and contained in the endeavour to plant the ball methodically upon the green time and again during the course of a round. If this feat is not accomplished with regularity from the fairway, the player is inclined to upbraid himself, because he recognises that every requirement was present to render the achievement well within his capabilities. The distance to be covered was not beyond his powers—the very fact that he selected an iron for the purpose proved this—and provided that neither the natural features of the

hole nor any outside influences were against his chances of success, there was actually little cause for his failure.

The only thing, therefore, that seems necessary in order to become an efficient iron player would appear to be the cultivation of a reliable method of play, in itself suitable to all types and conditions of golf courses. And as a training ground the inland courses may be especially recommended because of their exacting character. The lies upon them are generally tougher, and the ball does not sit so cleanly upon inland turf as upon the thyme-covered stretches of our seaside links. The sandy subsoil of our coast-bound courses moreover nurtures a finer species of grass which renders the club head less likely to be deflected. But once the principles of iron play have been practised and mastered upon the less flattering surfaces of our inland greens, the skill which has been acquired will be just as applicable to seaside conditions, and the strokes themselves will seem the easier to execute.

The correct manipulation of iron clubs is an art which eludes the grasp even of the most persistent golfer. It is not especially difficult to make some show of proficiency with them, although his favoured method of play may not be in accordance with the most approved manner. And it is in this direction that the mischief may be done. Wild horses, let alone the best advice, will not deter a player from pursuing a course, though shown to be obviously wrong, in which he is enjoying some measure of success. In most cases these more or less satisfactory results are obtained, not by a strictly correct method of striking the ball with iron clubs, but by adopting a swing which corresponds to that which is used with a driver, and by sweeping the ball with a

long full finish cleanly from the ground without taking turf. This is a villainous type of iron stroke. If real progress is desired it is imperative that such a style should be discarded. Turf must be taken, or at any rate definitely grazed, in front of the spot upon which the ball was situated before it left the face of the club. If the edge of the blade strikes the bottom of the ball and the ground simultaneously, and thence proceeds onwards into the turf, back spin and a controlled flight will be achieved. This point may be constantly reiterated ; but it is of such vital importance that, if the repetition of the doctrine helps to impress its significance upon the reader, it will be at any rate space well occupied. I believe that the insistence upon this principle strikes nearer the root of the matter than any other accepted law. It is the first of the primary essentials upon which I had wished to lay emphasis before an attempt was made to describe the shots themselves.

To proceed to another point of importance : in recent years insistence has been laid upon the power developed with the right hand. There have been several noteworthy exponents of this right-hand style of golf, and the great distances achieved in this manner have made a popular impression. Young players have endeavoured to emulate the example set before them, in the hope of adding length to their strokes ; and although their efforts in this direction may have been attended with some success, both accuracy and straightness have been frequently sacrificed to this fetish of long hitting. In previous days it was the fashion to regard the left hand not only as the guiding factor in the swing but as a real asset in the development of power. This teaching has to some extent been lost

sight of. In my own opinion it is the grip of the left hand and the straightness of the left arm, which should play the greatest part in every shot with an iron club. To secure this predominance, the grip of the left hand upon the shaft should be turned round, so that the back of the hand is plainly visible to the player himself at that time when his club head is resting behind the ball. The grip should be exceedingly tight, and both hands in the address and at all times during the course of the downward swing should be held slightly in front of the club head. Even before the back swing is commenced the left arm should be as straight as a gun barrel, because it is reasonable to suppose that, should any slackness in the arm be permitted in the address, the eventual straightening of it during the commencement of the swing must constitute an inaccurate backward movement of the club. If, however, it is taut in the beginning, all that remains to be done is to make sure that it retains this initial tautness throughout the stroke. The virtue of this precaution becomes evident when it is realised that the back swing will then be no more than an upright lift of the arm from a hinge connecting it with the left shoulder. The face of the club will turn only as far as it is natural for it to do so, and the wrist will bend gradually and evenly to the top of the swing. The twist of the shoulders should be reduced as far as possible, because the further they rotate the more easy it is to lose that sense of the existence of the club head which must be ever present in the mind. By eliminating to some extent the movement of the shoulders, the back swing will be conducted upon more upright lines; that is to say, the club will ascend in a more vertical direction instead of describing a flatter curve. This in itself is an advantage with all clubs,

especially when it is required to remove a carefully cut divot of turf.

The right hand should grasp the club in such a manner that it conforms to the needs of a golfing grip without conveying the impression that it is with this hand that the stroke will be played. I would suggest that the right hand should confine itself in the operation of swinging to two important duties: in the first place, to an attempt to control the orbit of the swing; and, secondly, to the prevention of an exaggerated turning of the face of the club. If the right hand performs these functions properly, there will be more likelihood that the blade of the club will meet the ball at impact square to the line of play. Although this seeming restraint is placed upon the activities of the right arm, its contribution towards the application of power will nevertheless be asserted subconsciously; but its dangerous tendency to misdirect a shot will be definitely checked. In order that the club may be guided aright, the back swing with irons should not be long. Indeed, if a shot is struck well it will go as far with a short swing as with any other. What is more, if the principle of the straight left arm is adhered to, it will be found a physical impossibility to swing back beyond a controllable length. No golfer should feel depressed if he finds that he cannot swing back freely, since by so doing he will not lose distance in his strokes, and will gain a great deal in accuracy. To assist towards a compact swing the right elbow should remain close to the body throughout the stroke. It should certainly never flap the air as if it had rebelled against its imprisonment to the right side. The right wrist furthermore should not relax to such an extent that it becomes weakly bent during the up swing,

but as far as possible it must maintain a straight line from the bend of the elbow down the forearm to the grip of the forefinger and thumb when the final position of the back swing is reached.

In the down swing the club is pulled towards the ball by the stiff left arm, as opposed to any injudicious attempt of the right hand to hit from the top of the swing. The duty of the right hand at a stage preparatory to the actual striking of the ball is simply to straighten the left wrist so that the left arm and the shaft of the club at impact are brought roughly into prolongation with each other. After the blade of the club has proceeded through the turf, there will be small inclination for the arms to continue towards a full follow through, for reasons chiefly due to the distribution of the weight of the body. To all intents and purposes the stroke has been finished, inasmuch as the ball should now be in the course of its flight, and no fault may now be corrected by carrying the movements of the arms to a more advanced stage. Neither hand will be powerful enough to stop the movement of the club head suddenly, nor is it desirable that this should be done. Rather allow the swing to slow up of its own accord by a natural process of reaction, unassisted by any further attempt to push the club head forward.

Bodily intervention in the execution of an iron shot is another of those factors in the swing which should be left, like the right hand in hitting, to the subconscious instinct which insists upon the full share of work being performed by each member in its turn without any conscious interference on the part of the player. They are only dangerous when they gain the upper hand, and it is advisable merely to see that

they do not overstep the bounds of expediency. For instance, the weight of the body applied to the stroke at the moment of impact makes for extra power, and I think that generally speaking any such additional power is applied in a great measure unwittingly. We all remember too well, however, those occasions when the swing becomes subservient to a ruinous lurching of the body, and it is therefore important to provide that these excessive movements should not take place during the playing of the stroke.

A moderately wide stance will ensure a firm foundation from which to hit, and help to neutralise the wayward tendencies of the body. The stance should be slightly open, but experiment will determine for the golfer himself what exactly is comfortable for him and suited to his style. The weight is chiefly concentrated upon the left leg, and the sensation experienced in taking up the stance is that the player is all the while edging towards the hole. He should, however, feel that he is preventing himself from falling forward in that direction by exerting a restraining pressure upon the instep of the right foot and by a certain stiffness of the right side. During the up swing, when the left heel is lifted and the left knee has bent forward to assist in this movement, the weight mainly falls upon the ball of the left foot. Since the body should not have turned unduly, there need be no exaggeration either in the bend of the left knee or in the lifting of the left heel. In the delivery of the blow itself the weight moves forward even a shade more, and it is then that the restraining influence of the right side and instep should be most in evidence to reduce the chances of any loss of balance to a minimum. At the moment when the club hits the ball this position

is still maintained, and not until the ball has been struck does the body come forward even a fraction further. In this way the shot is played downwards and a steadying measure of back spin is applied to the ball. The forward movement materially assists the golfer to compel his follow through, such as it is, to proceed in a straight line. If this movement has been carried out, the divot will be cut not diagonally across the flight of the ball but in a direct line to the hole. It may be found in this method of iron play that the inclination to rise upon the toes is strongly felt, but it must be resisted, as otherwise socketing or a tendency to push out may creep into the player's game.

We will now examine the iron clubs in detail. The main considerations that govern the execution of the iron shot have been dealt with and are common to every club which possesses a steel blade, either straight or of medium loft. In the description of these clubs, however, it will be profitable to introduce a little detail from time to time with regard to the playing of strokes with them. The object will be to discuss the attitude which should be adopted and the application of the characteristic methods which have been advocated.

The cleek is the most powerful iron club in the bag, but its possessor is fortunate if he can play it consistently. It is a staunch friend in a gale, and nowhere more useful than when playing into the teeth of the wind. A low shot may be hit with it; and if once the slice, which is a special danger, is thoroughly mastered, the shot will not deviate far from the line and will rarely land the ball into grievous trouble. This susceptibility to slice, however, may not be so easily overcome, since the very nature of the downward blow, recommended in the use of iron clubs,



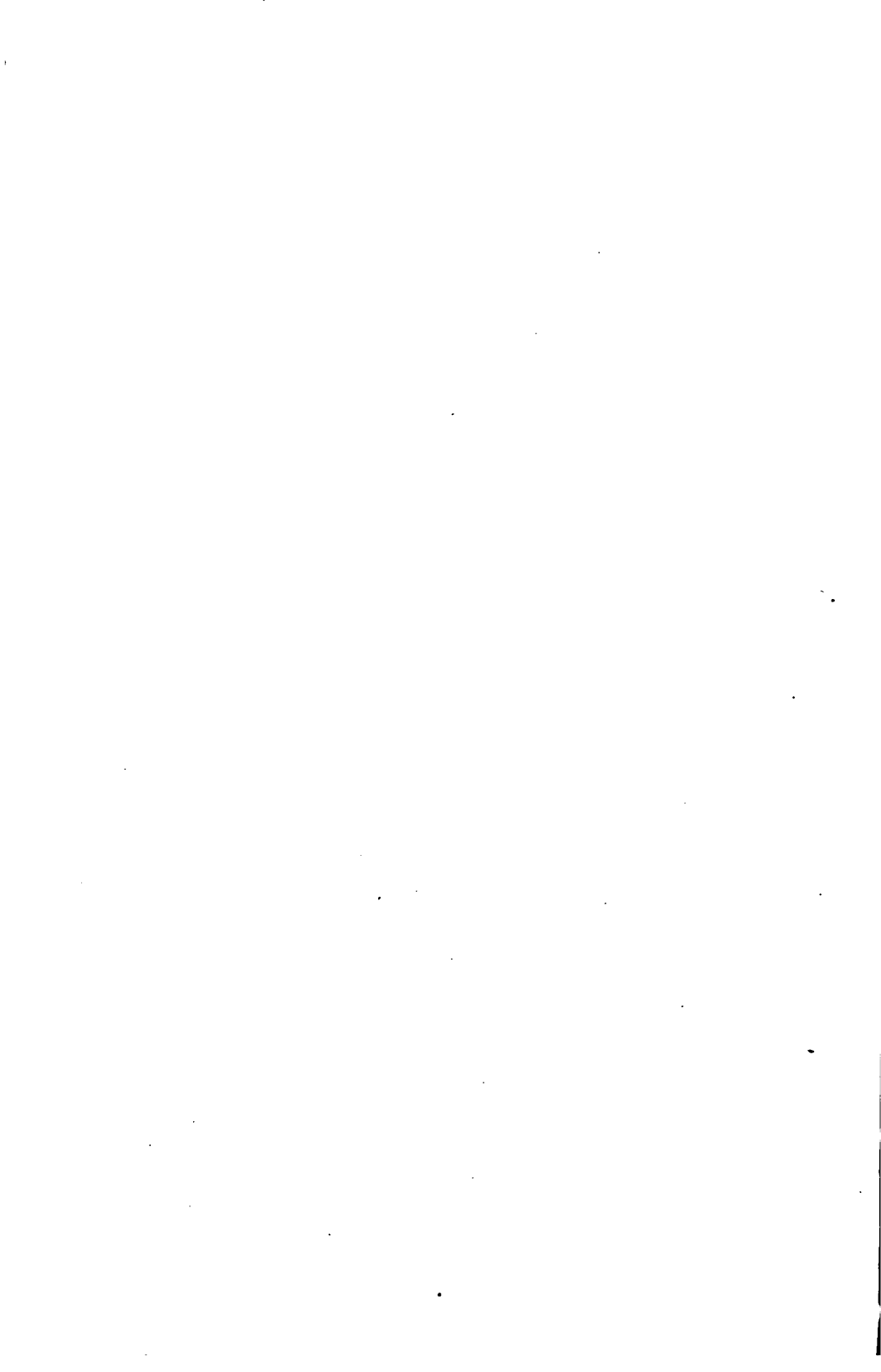
Medium Iron Approach : Taking up stance with relation to the line.



Medium Iron Approach : Top of back swing.



Medium Iron Approach : Finish.



tends to make the golfer especially vulnerable to this particular form of error. The cleek also, it must not be forgotten, boasts of a more upright face than the rest of its steel-headed companions; and it may be said as a general rule that the straighter the face of a club, the harder it will be to correct a persistent fault. With no other iron does it seem so difficult to swing out in the follow through, or, as it has been aptly put, 'to wrap the club head round the ball.' Still, it is necessary to aim at this type of shot, and it will be of some assistance to remember that the whole attempt to hit from an inward position to an outward point will become more possible if the left arm is mainly entrusted with the task. The reason for this advice may be easily perceived if it is recognised that when the left shoulder is in chief command, the left arm at full extension is able to reach a point with the club more forward, and out on the line of direction itself, than would be the case when the right arm has been similarly outstretched from the right shoulder. Moreover, a great mistake will be made if the swing with a cleek is allowed to assume the dimensions of that permitted with a brassie. It should be firm and compact, and no slackening of any description should be tolerated. As it has been suggested, the cleek is a grand weapon with which to do battle against the elements; but down wind it will be scarcely as valuable, where a low-flying and far-running shot is not often required.

The quest of a perfect cleek may last a lifetime, since first-class examples of its kind are nowadays rarely to be found. This probably accounts for the fact that a large number of golfers do not take kindly to this club. An ordinary cleek is a terribly difficult

club with which to play a confident shot, because it is for some reason or other usually forged with a noticeable absence of loft upon its face. The best type of cleek does not appear unusually straight-faced, and inspires some degree of confidence.

The driving-iron is often preferred to take the place of a cleek. It possesses a deep blade which makes it more adaptable to shots through the fairway, but otherwise it has little advantage over the more venerable weapon. The club I should, however, recommend instead of the recognised driving-iron, is not easily defined. Compared with a mid-iron it will be heavier in weight, a shade less lofted, and deeper in the face; but it will be a club which will lift the ball from the ground without much difficulty. Indeed, an iron of this type may only be discovered by subjecting as many mid-irons as possible to a careful scrutiny and selecting in due course the most powerful of them. Having obtained such an addition to your equipment, it may be considered the strongest of your genuine approaching irons, into the category of which the cleek will not be admitted owing to the rarity of the occasions upon which its employment will be considered essential. You may term it your 'big iron.'

This club will be invaluable when you are confronted down wind by a green protected by bunkers which necessitate a carrying shot. A cleek or a spoon would in all probability cause you to overrun the green, but this monster medium iron will, owing to its weight, allow you to get the required distance. In addition, the loft, which is almost that of the mid-iron, will grant you sufficient height, with a corresponding absence of run, to enable you to accomplish by a straightforward shot what could only by the most elaborate means

have been achieved with another club. Broadly speaking, then, this iron will remove all anxiety, when a long high shot leaves the player in doubt as to what club should be selected for the purpose. It will be widely appreciated therefore upon inland courses, where shots of this nature recur with the greatest frequency. Plateau greens, in the approaching of which the facilities for a running stroke are not apparent from a distance of a hundred and forty yards or more, present an awkward problem, and this manner of surmounting it may afford a solution of the difficulty.

The mid-iron, which conforms with the conventional and recognised type, is probably the most important iron club in the bag. It will be called upon to negotiate more important shots during the course of the round than any other club, with the exception of the putter. The player who puts his second shot upon the green presumably reaps the advantage over his less successful opponent four times out of six; and considering that the majority of holes on a golf course are constructed upon the principle of a drive and an iron shot, steadiness with this club is a distinct asset. A good iron player will also have less need to resort to desperate putting as a means of recovery, which is bound in time to result in erratic work upon the green. No peculiarities in the club itself, nor even in the few shots that may be attempted with it, tend to confuse the player. Iron shots are, or should be, simple in conception. Tricky play with a mid-iron is a remote stage of extravagance. It is necessary only to acquire the right method in style and develop a consistency in one and the same shot in order to secure the best results; and it is because mid-iron play is representa-

tive of all iron play in golf, that I should like to lay particular stress not only upon the methods but upon the attitude that should be adopted towards it.

Firstly, there is nothing flashy about fine iron play, there are little or no variations in flight, the ball does not as a rule require to be hit with any slice or pull, variations in the height of its trajectory are only necessary in cases of emergency. A vivid contrast in style was once presented to me. One of the great professionals was playing with a prominent amateur. At a certain hole both the drives had been hit well and truly down the course, but the amateur had to play the odd by a yard or so. He proceeded in this wise. The wind was blowing strongly across the line of play from left to right, and the distance to the pin was that of a full mid-iron shot. The amateur played his shot, and played it well from left to right, and the ball staggered on to the green safely enough, but in an uncertain manner. He gave a visible sigh of relief. It looked a moderately impressive stroke until the professional, from much the same place, hit the ball confidently on to the centre of the green with a high shot that was notable in no respect save that it flew perfectly straight, pitched on the green, and stayed there. Thus may all the arts and graces of iron play be put to shame by a straightforward shot.

The ball should never waver in its flight. This is the ideal for which to strive. The straight left arm, the guidance of the right hand and the proper taking of the turf may perhaps help towards this object. It is another matter, however, to be able to hit the ball unwaveringly upon the true line to the pin. How many times may a well-hit shot fly unerringly into trouble on one side or the other, and yet leave the

player mystified at the reason for the strangeness of its direction.

In playing this mid-iron shot it is, above all, important at the very beginning to place oneself in the correct position, and to have definitely decided upon the proper stance. The feet should not be close to one another, but should be separated until the player feels that his weight is firmly established upon them. Too open a stance is not recommended, because it is more difficult during the swing in this case to keep the line of play always present in the mind. Both legs should be bent very slightly at the knees, and the stance from the hips downwards must feel as if it were held at great tension. This state of tension must be maintained throughout the swing. It is the golfer's solid indication to the line to the hole. The left knee must not bend in the back swing sufficiently to imperil the sense of direction. It is as if the lower section of the body were embedded in a concrete wall along which it is desired to play. Especially is the golfer advised to set his stance carefully to the shot, to make sure before any attempt to swing is made that in this he has at any rate left nothing to chance.

The stance is chiefly a question of attitude, although method may have to do with its maintenance during the swing, because the taking up of the stance is connected intimately with the player's conception of the line to the hole. In much the same way, the calculation of the distance to be obtained is also a question of attitude; but the accurate finding of that distance in the stroke itself is certainly a methodical practice. It is with this question of strength in the long iron shot I wish to deal.

The selection of the correct club for the purpose

will but vaguely trouble the golfer. When in doubt, take the stronger club; and we will suppose that the choice in this instance falls upon the mid-iron. Then visualise the situation. Suppose the approach to the green is open, then there is no excuse to play anything but the regular stroke. Decide roughly the place upon which it would be desirable to pitch the ball. Each player usually knows how far his ball will run if struck correctly. On most occasions, if the iron shot described in this chapter is adopted, the spot upon which the ball should pitch will be situated upon some portion of the green itself, since the back spin imparted should pull the ball up within fifteen yards or so. Do not force any shot unless it is impossible to avoid it, since by so doing you are making it harder to pitch the ball somewhere near the selected place.

Methodical alterations occur in a situation of this kind. Imagine that the green is set at the farthest extremity of a right-hand curve conveniently banked up, and that it is bunkered to the right short of the hole and in a line with it. It will be a moral certainty that any stroke played to the left, well clear of the bunkers, will eventually finish near the hole, provided that it has a little run. The player, having then selected a reasonable place upon which to attempt to pitch the ball, will take up his stance a shade more in front. But he will swing in the way that he is accustomed with the average iron shot, and will deliver the blow with his usual regard for the principles of hitting downwards and through the ball. The flight of the ball will be lower, and will in this way induce more run when it strikes the ground. In a case of this description the player should not try to increase the run by any other

means than by the modification of the stance, since exceptional run will not be required.

Perhaps at this stage it would be as well to describe the purely running shot and a method of playing it. This stroke will be of infinite service to the golfer ; since, however excellently he may be able to pitch, there are conditions which are so unfavourable to the all-air route that the run up will be the only shot which may surmount the complexities of the situation. The running quality of the shot often carries the ball past the hole, and it is in this peculiarity that the main difficulty is encountered. The back-spin shot, on the other hand, is inclined to fall short of expectations by failing to reach the hole side ; and indeed the flight of the shot is deceptive, since it invariably pitches a few yards nearer the player than was anticipated while the ball was in the air. With the running stroke it is necessary to lay your plans carefully ahead. The mid-iron is the usual club to employ for every shot of this nature from forty yards to a hundred and fifty, but in each case the procedure will be the same. The position of that spot upon which the ball should approximately land must be mapped out in the same way that was advocated with other types of iron shots. In the case of the run up it will be nearer the golfer than might have appeared to be the case at first sight. It is amazing how far the ball will keep on in a series of steady but gradually decreasing bounds. In the dim distance it may appear to have all but finished its mad career along the ground, its movement forward will seem to have degenerated into the merest trickle, but at the last gasp it may frequently run another twenty paces. Observe therefore how delicate should be your touch, and how sure your knowledge of strength.

In the playing of the shot, your chief considerations should be to hit the ball absolutely clean, to take as little turf as possible, to strike the ball in the exact centre of the club, and to impart the merest suspicion of pull rather than slice. Anything approaching the nature of a jab will prove fatal; because in the first place this will render it all but impossible to find the correct spot upon which it has been decided to pitch the ball, and secondly the maximum run will not be obtained, since the ball will start swiftly enough from the club but will drag towards the end of its run and pull up abruptly at the last. If the ball is half topped, the finest calculations will be brought to naught. A low downward, and therefore a low back swing, is necessary, combined with a slightly lifted follow through, which will suggest that the ball is raised just the required and natural height to allow it to be dropped at the correct moment upon the patch of turf from whence it will continue its inevitable course up to the hole. The swing will be something of a sweep perfectly controlled. A turning movement of the wrist should be allowed and felt especially at impact. The stroke should be played with the utmost deliberation, and so slowly that it would seem as if the least possible power had been exercised. The wrists should not bend appreciably, nor the grip with either hand slacken, during the execution of the stroke. Although the run up is invaluable upon occasions, I prefer as a general rule the shot that is played right up to the hole and stopped there. Flight in my opinion can be controlled more easily than run. Those who agree with me will reserve the run up for emergencies and exercise care in deciding not only whether the stroke is excusable but whether the condition of the ground warrants

your putting your trust in a stroke, the success of which may depend entirely upon the kindness of the ball's treatment after it has pitched. Worm-casts may check the ball at once, coarse grass will not allow its running powers free play, and very undulating features will reduce everything to a question of luck.

To go to the opposite extreme an additional amount of stop is sometimes needed. It may be obtained in a long shot without exceptional difficulty. Extreme back spin is imparted not by hitting the ball smoothly, as in the case with the running shot, but by striking it as smartly as the length of the shot may allow. For this reason, instead of using a club which will permit you to play within yourself, select a weaker club. This will compel you to exercise the fullest power of hitting of which you are capable. A higher flight will be achieved and little run will take place because the ball will have expended all its energy so far as run is concerned during its passage through the air. If at the same time back spin has been induced owing to the manner in which the ball has been struck, the distance the ball will proceed after it has struck the ground will be cut down to an infinitesimal fraction compared to the length of the shot. Stand therefore a suspicion more behind the ball in the address. Let the stroke be played exactly in accordance with the methods of iron play as outlined in this chapter, taking care, however, to hit the ball and the ground in the same relation to one another as has been advised. Since the stance has been taken up more behind the ball, this will naturally cause the player to take the ground before the ball is hit unless he has exercised the greatest care. If he takes the ground in this way he will lose distance, and the intention of the shot will be lost.

Also, when the ball is played from such a position in relation to the stance, there will be a tendency for any full shot to finish wide to the left of the hole. This must be counteracted by aiming a little to the right of the hole and endeavouring, by means of the left arm and by the grip of the left hand, to hold the shot up to the right of the pin.

This shot concludes the analysis of the different strokes of an ordinary nature ; but I intend to depart from the straightforward path in one respect only, by showing how the ball may be cut up to the hole in such a manner that an undue risk is not taken. When the green slopes from right to left it is certain that the ball will, immediately upon its pitch, fall down below the hole and, if anything of a pull spin has been imparted, it will probably run off the green altogether and finish either in the rough or in a hazard especially designed for the purpose. The stroke I wish to describe is not a fancy shot, but a precautionary measure ; and the curve in the ball's flight is not pronounced, but is a very gradual working towards the right-hand line. The intention is contained in the theory that a cut ball will hold itself slightly up the incline upon its first bounce, so that so long as the shot is played a shade above the pin there will be little chance of its falling below the hole to such an extent that it will finish in the hazards below the green. All that will be required will be to take up the stance so that the shot is directed straight at the hole, and to swing in the ordinary way ; with the exception that the club face must be kept square or even faced out slightly at impact and afterwards ; and that the grip of the right hand should be more in evidence than is advised in the case of the average stroke. It is recommended

that the lower section of the right palm, that portion which is nearest the wrist, should maintain a definite pressure upon the joint of the left thumb, and that this pressure should be also definitely experienced at the finish of the stroke. This will result in a hollowing of that part of the wrists which is uppermost; and if the hands are kept well in front of the stroke at impact, a very slight appearance of slice will be given to the flight of the ball. It is most important that this shot, with whatsoever club it is played, should be executed in the manner of a half shot.

There is a certain despised club—it has been called no club at all—to which I should like to call the attention of every golfer. In spite of all the hard things which have been said about it and all the queer names given to it, there is no club with which it is easier to play from the fairway or so effective in forcing the ball from the rough. It is known variously as the mongrel mashie, the heavy mashie, and occasionally as the lofting-iron. Suffice it to say that it fits exactly between the mid-iron and the mashie as regards loft, and weighs slightly more than either club. It has a deep face, and in this it is unlike the jigger. High forcing shots may be attempted and brought off where no straighter club would have served the purpose. It responds to the same swing as is used with other iron clubs. It is a tower of strength alike to the timid golfer and the mighty hitter. You will not regret its inclusion in your bag of clubs.

No more need be laid down as essential to the well-being of the golfer who aspires towards reasonable heights of excellence in iron play. The instructions have perhaps been far from exciting, and brilliant results have not been suggested as the outcome of

painful attention to the principles enumerated in this chapter. But if an iron shot is hit truly and firmly, the crisp ring that denotes perfect application of steel to gutta-percha will be some atonement for the laborious practice of a swing that can be scarcely classed as one of nature's own.

CHAPTER VII

SHORT APPROACHES

PUTTING has been described as an art and approaching as a science. Of the two it is easier to become moderately consistent in the playing of the approach shot; but at no time is the golfer's touch upon the green invariably beyond reproach. It is a frequent occurrence to hear the despairing cry: 'I haven't the slightest idea how to get the ball into the hole'; while on the other hand the philosophical remark: 'I was a bit off my mashie' is rarely made. This seems to point to the conclusion that approaching is neither so mysterious nor so troublesome as putting, that it is a department of the game in which the golfer feels himself to be on comparatively safe ground. An occasional day of ill-judged pitches does not necessarily foretell weeks of anguished practising in the hope of stamping out an insidious fault, whereas a few short putts missed during the course of a round may indicate that there is in store for the victim a period of mental upheaval. Good play with the mashie or niblick will have this advantage, that it will reduce the erratic act of putting to the smallest proportions.

The short approach needs, in the first place, what may be called an 'eye for country.' In all probability there is a greater variety of strokes to be played with a mashie and a mashie niblick than with all the

rest of the clubs put together, and it is this 'eye for country' which determines the choice in a given situation. It would be too big an undertaking to enumerate the occasions on which one particular shot would be preferred to another, and even if such an attempt were conscientiously made, it would be impossible to take into account personal preferences and idiosyncrasies. For instance, a particular situation to one mind might seem to require a run up with a mid-iron, while to another a pitch for some reason or other would appear to be the obvious shot required. Perhaps the best way out of the difficulty is to give some explanation of the shots themselves, and to supply an illustration now and again of those occasions on which the employment of a special shot becomes absolutely essential.

First of all, it may be understood that, strictly speaking, there are two shots with a mashie from a hundred yards to the distance of the edge of the green which will come into use. The one is the pitch, the other we will know as the 'half-and-half' stroke. The more important of these I consider to be the pitched shot. It may be played with equal advantage upon seaside and inland courses. It is by no means hard to master if it is recognised that maximum stop need not be striven after on every occasion. Its value lies not so much in the ability to pull the ball up quickly after it has pitched, as to allow intervening and detrimental influences short of the green to be disregarded, so that the ball may come to earth upon a smooth alighting place—best of all upon the green itself—and proceed unimpeded up to the hole side. The influences we have indicated may represent anything which might introduce an element of mischance in the event -

of the ball falling short of the edge of the green. They may take the form of bunkers, rough grass, or even the irregular surface of the fairway. Provided that there is a sufficient space of putting green upon which to loft the ball, it appears foolish to ignore the advantages it supplies in the way of a true bounce; whereas the fairway may have it in its power to administer the kicks of outrageous fortune, however smooth it may appear at first sight.

The pitching mashie—and by that I mean a mashie which is well lofted in the face—should not be a cumbersome club. Those which inspire the greater confidence lie neatly upon the ground. The sole is fairly broad with a sharp forward edge, because a narrow sole is inclined to catch in the ground and hold up the follow through. The upper edge of the blade should be, as far as possible, parallel to the line of the sole. A mashie that is obviously much deeper at the toe than at the heel does not give the impression of a truly balanced blade. The blade itself should be set in a true line straight out from the socket, since a hooked face will make it necessary to correct the tendency towards a pull, and this defect will add yet another detail of execution to the many that must be considered in the playing of the stroke. Golf is an exception to the saying that the bad workman blames his tools. Poor clubs will have a disastrous effect on any player's game. They may easily cause radical alterations in the swing itself; and when all is said and done, the golf swing is such a susceptible organism that it is liable to conform to the imperfections of its instruments.

In iron play it was suggested that the stance, once taken up, should be maintained so far as the alignment

of the hips is concerned, in such a manner that the impression of the line to the hole becomes an integral part of the stroke. With the mashie shot, when stop is required, several elaborate motions of the arms, wrists, and hands take place, and these movements are of such absorbing importance that the visualised line of play may become lost unless the assurance that the lower section of the body is firmly established with regard to the direction convinces the player that he has at any rate made sure of the line of his shot.

For this reason it is advised that the stance should not be too open, and the left leg should only be withdrawn sufficiently to allow the player to scan in comfort the problems ahead of him.

The rule holds good that a patch of ground should be selected upon which to pitch the ball in every kind of approach. This habit of planning out the shot in advance is invaluable. Even if the player does not always succeed in carrying it into successful execution, he has, nevertheless, refused by this attitude to recognise anything of the nature of chance, and he will henceforward avoid the playing of a stroke in the haphazard manner of one who sends up a prayer to heaven in the hope that miracles may happen or a kindly fate intervene.

Let us take a shot, by way of example, of about eighty yards. The extent of the green is great enough to permit of a ball being pitched upon it with a certain amount of cut in order to prevent its running far beyond the hole side. The ball should lie opposite the left foot, and the shaft—when the club head is resting behind the ball—should be practically vertical, which will mean that the hands are not pushed forward in

front of the club head. Sole the blade as close under the ball as can be managed, take up your position closer to the ball than was your custom, and hold the club shorter by gripping lower down the shaft. Such a procedure will give you a greater control during the stroke. The face should be turned out slightly, because with a mashie, from a short distance, it will be advisable to cut across the ball a fraction in order to obtain any special degree of back spin, unless a peculiarly difficult type of shot is attempted. By 'cutting across the ball,' I do not mean the playing of a miniature slice; nothing is farther from the thought, although the ball may be inclined to break a shade from left to right. The effect of facing the club head outwards is to compel the blade to lie back even beyond its natural loft. Indeed a high shot may stop the ball quickly enough, provided that the ball is not scooped into the air but actually hit downwards. This may seem something of a paradox, but the fact remains that from a level lie any good mashie player would not only hit the ball higher by means of the downward blow, but would in so doing impart a large measure of back spin. It would be idle to examine the reason for this too closely. It may be briefly stated that the ball will tend to run up the loft of the club, when the lower edge buries itself under and in front of the ball, so that from the very first the upward movement, which will eventually lead to a high flight, has in part commenced actually upon the blade itself.

This introduces us to the question of the swing's orbit. The club must descend as vertically as possible to that spot of turf upon which the lower half of the ball rests. This spot will of course be hidden from the striker's view, but it must be an imaginary

point at which he should aim. The application of this edge of the club's blade upon this minute spot will not be so difficult as it might be thought, and the golfer, if he persists in his efforts to strike the ball and the ground simultaneously, will find in the course of time that the idea will not appear so impracticable as it seems at first sight. Such a manner of striking the ball is actually the secret of crisp mashie play. After the ball is struck, the swing should proceed through the bottom of the ball and continue as low to the ground as possible. Struck in this way, the ball will leave the club from a point higher up the face than if it had been swept up by its natural loft. Needless to say, the club face should not turn over at impact, because this would certainly reduce the loft and cause the ball to depart with a lower trajectory. Without crumpling the arms, lift the club up straight by a sharp bend and turn of the left wrist, all the while gripping firmly with the forefinger and thumb of the right hand, since these fingers will have a great deal to do with the shot itself. Do not swing back loosely. Any half-hearted methods will prove fatal. At the top of the swing the hands should not have risen as high as the level of the shoulder, and the length of the swing will entirely depend on the bend of the left wrist. Bring the club down decisively, and with the fingers of the right hand force the blade of the club beneath the ball and push it through firmly, keeping the face of the club square all the time. Just before impact takes place, keep the left hand back so that the loft of the club is granted free play.

Perhaps the best method of doing this is to hollow the left wrist a fraction against the force of the right hand. It must be remembered, however, that after



Mashie Pitch : Top of back swing.



Mashie Pitch : Finish.

the ball is actually struck the left hand must come forward with the right, because if the hollowing of the left wrist is still maintained and the left arm at the same time is kept stationary, the result will be a useless upward flick with the right hand. The line of the hips will have been held rigidly according to their original position. The left heel will have barely left the ground and any pivoting required would have been effected only by a slight bend of the left knee.

The weight is evenly distributed upon both feet in the beginning, and no alteration of the balance takes place until the downward swing commences. Then a peculiar movement is observed, and one that might at first sight appear extremely dangerous. Both knees, which were slightly bent during the address and in the back swing, bend a shade more in a forward direction while the club head is descending. This tends to advance the club head, so that it may not strike the ground behind the ball but continue onwards and through the ball. The position of the hips, however, and the weight of the body will not be disturbed appreciably if the player refuses to sympathise with this forward bend of the knees, which represents nothing more than a last-minute alteration of the stance to counteract what must necessarily have been, in the first place, the slightly inaccurate soleing of the club. Otherwise it is clear that the edge of the blade cannot reach that undermost point of the ball which is inaccessible in the address.

Nor should the head of the player move in any respect. It should be held down with the eyes fixed upon the back of the ball. Do not lift the head anxiously at the finish of the stroke as if anticipating some dire result. If you allow yourself to be influenced so easily,

and have so little confidence in your ability, you will not be able to keep your head still and concentrate on the ball in the moment of hitting. Compel yourself to hit the ball sharply, so that whatever happens it must pitch upon the green. There is nothing so demoralising in the attempt to acquire the pitching temperament as to find the ball falling on the thicker turf just short of the green, never to reach it. It is upon these occasions that the insidious thought intrudes itself that a scuffling shot would have paid better than a stop shot which happened to fail.

We now come to the 'half-and-half' shot. It comes into action when the ball has found a cuppy lie. Nothing but marvellous ingenuity will enable the player to insert the blade of the club beneath the ball cleanly without removing a little of the soil behind the ball during the process, in which case much back spin cannot be imparted. When a mashie is used for this stroke it is unwise to pitch the ball on to the green. A risk must sometimes be taken, and the ball must be pitched short of the green and allowed to run on of its own accord. In effect, the shot will be a quarter-iron stroke played with a mashie. The left hand will grip hard, and the ball will have to be driven out by the strength of the left arm. Any attempt to nip it out of its bad lie with the right hand will result, more often than not, in disaster or loss of direction. The face of the club in the up swing must not turn as in the case of the pitch shot. The swing should resemble more of a careful cricket stroke. The flight will be lower, and the check spin will be neutralised to some extent. The ball will not run in the free manner of a purely running stroke, but will drag its way wearily to its destination. This is a safe stroke even from a fair lie, so that if the

player at any time thinks that for some reason or other the pitching shot is inadvisable, he may resort to this simple shot in which the wrists are held comparatively stiff, and the loft of the club is reduced by keeping the hands well in front of the club face at impact.

The run up shot may be included in the list of short approaches, but the mid-iron or jigger is the club with which it should be played. A description of the stroke was given in the chapter on iron shots. A good deal of discrimination must be exercised in selecting the occasion on which it may be brought into use. Except in cases of grim necessity, the deciding factor will be the state of the ground over which the ball must roll before it reaches the smooth surface of the green. Inland turf is most unsuited to the shot on account of its quality and consistency, and the player will be well advised to adopt in preference the 'half-and-half' shot with a mashie. Upon seaside courses the question is a different one altogether. The compact texture of the turf permits of an even run of the ball; so much so that, provided there are no hazards blocking the line, the run up may advisedly take the place of the pitch, not only because of the more suitable nature of the ground, but because the ball is more likely to escape the buffeting of the wind.

The weight of the wind is far heavier upon our coasts than it is farther inland, where it is broken up into idle gusts by the repeated interference of trees and hills and the like. But links lying by the shore receive little protection from a wind which drives over the sea in all its untamed vigour. So strong is it on an average day, that a short pitch of about thirty yards may be blown by a side wind as much as two or three yards from its line; and in playing a shot of this kind it is

important to make due allowance for deflection. What would appear to be an equally strong wind upon an inland course will not alter the direction more than a foot or so. Apart, therefore, from considerations of the nature of the turf, it may be seen that it is more effective to keep the ball low at the seaside and play a running shot which may not be adversely influenced by currents of air.

Under the right circumstances the run up is a paying stroke ; and perhaps the best way of regarding it may be that of a long putt freely delivered with a lofted club. A smooth but decisive tap must be administered, no turf should be taken, and the ball should be lifted clean into the air, the right hand at the same time turning over to keep it from rising overmuch. Few more fascinating sensations are experienced in golf than those enjoyed when a run up is played by the golfer as well as he knows how, and the course of the ball is watched as it gallantly breasts every slope and finally comes to rest in a position adjacent to the hole. A gradual incline up to a plateau green, with the pin placed close to the edge, calls for this stroke ; and if it is well played, there is the greater chance for a holeable putt than when the crest is played for with a pitch. It is a great asset if the two shots can be played with equal precision, especially when this skill is combined with a sufficient experience to know when the one may be safely attempted or the other definitely avoided.

We are getting in still closer to the immediate vicinity of the green, where we shall find that upon the success of a chip shot often depends the issue of a hole. The object of the chip is to put the ball dead, or so near the pin that the putt would be holed three times out of four. Players will find that there are periods lasting



Running-up Shot : Back swing.



Running-up Shot : Finish.

as long as a month or more when they can do no wrong, that the ball sometimes all but lips the hole, and remains so near that it may be knocked in with the back of the putter. So uplifted in spirit do they become under these happy circumstances, that the idea of taking a putter for their long putts appears palpably absurd when a mashie would serve the purpose far more efficiently. It is needless to say that proper self-respect saves them from such an unconventional proceeding. But the shot can be a fickle one, and there are days and weeks when the knack is temporarily lost and the chip may not be played aright.

This very short approach is mainly a wrist shot with a mashie. In playing it, the body must be held as immovable as a rock. The arms should barely move in the up swing; and the wrists should be the hinge which allows the club to move backwards, although the hands will move forward after the ball is hit. I have found it beneficial to turn the grip of the right hand over and more on top of the shaft for this particular stroke, which brings the wrists together and thus centralises the pivot of the swing. Do not slacken the grip of the fingers at any time and imagine that you are developing the actual striking of the ball with the crook of the right forefinger, which encircles the shaft and which is kept firmly in place by the pressure of the thumb on the opposite side of the grip. It is as well to keep the hands in front of the head of the club, so that the shaft lies at an angle reducing the loft of the face.

The ball must therefore be hit downwards, so that the degree of drag thus applied will render the run of the ball more controllable. The back swing will be longer than the follow through, but without anything

akin to a jab being evident in the stroke. The club head must go through smoothly with the arms, although the finish should be decisively curtailed to within a foot or so. It will be found that the half-top will show a better result than if the ground had been grazed too soon ; so that it is desirable to err for choice on that side. The ball should be elevated from the ground, but it need not be hit higher than necessary. The distance of its carry should be such that it drops on the predetermined place on the green, which has been noted as likely to ensure a true bounce.

Suppose, for instance, the green to be undulating for a few paces in front of the player. He must loft the ball over these unreliable features by standing more behind his ball and imparting additional cut with the object of pulling the ball up quicker. If, on the other hand, these irregular folds in the ground lie immediately short of the hole, thus giving no chance of a well-played pitch stopping by the flag, the opposite procedure must be adopted, and the ball hit lower with more run. It would be, in fact, a chip shot played in the manner of a minute run-up shot, and it might be played with a suitable iron.

In much the same category as the chip shot are included the small mashie niblick pitches. Occasion will arise for the use of this club apart from heavy work out of the rough. The longer approaches, where exceptional stop is imperative, can be played in the same manner as with the mashie ; but high-lofted chips are so delicate that very skilful handling is required. It is important, however, that they should be cultivated, because the necessity for their employment is often the outcome of a bad second shot. As a recovery from previous misdemeanours, they are invaluable ; and the

golfer should not shrink from playing them, but acquire confidence as best he may by practice and assiduous attention.

Whether from the malicious intention of the architect of the course or a cruel intervention of fate, a sliced iron shot may have landed you, if not at the bottom of a cavernous bunker, at any rate on the side of it farther from the hole. Out with the mashie niblick none the less, and let us see what may be done. It is clear that the ball must be lifted high up and dropped over the bunker on to the green with as much cut upon it as may be applied at such short range. The question is how to do it. The simplest manner of playing the shot from a fair lie seems to me to be the following.

Take up a stance so much behind the ball that it is lying practically opposite the left toe. Keep all the weight upon the right foot, and bend the right knee inwards. Maintain that position until the shot is definitely completed. In order to add to the already considerable loft of your club, turn the face out to the right of the line, with the shaft inclined in a backward direction, by hollowing the left wrist on the top of the shaft. The intention of the stroke will be to slice under the ball, so that the facing out of the club head will counteract the oblique pull across the ball. All body movement must be eliminated, and everything must be left to the arms, wrists, and hands. Hold the club firmly in the fingers, but allow the wrists to be loose and free. A loose grip combined with slack wrists will be fatal; but the very fact that the fingers exercise complete control will allow the left wrist a degree of extra liberty.

Lift the club up straight and outside the ball, without twisting the shoulders, and allow the left wrist in

every case to bend to its fullest extent. From the top of the swing bring the club down with the right hand at as great a speed as possible ; but by the time the club head has reached the ball the left wrist should be hollowed again as in the address. Hit the ball from the heel across to the toe of the club head, allowing the right hand to come under the left, and refusing all the while to let the left arm come forward in the direction of the stroke. At the finish of the shot the club head cannot have followed through for any great distance, since the left hand has imposed itself against the force of the right arm. So far as it may, the club head will follow through moderately low to the ground, and will finish well to the left of the hole. The refusal to allow the left hand to take part in the finishing movements of the stroke, even though the club may be held somewhat low after impact, will have succeeded in conveying the sensation that the ball has been definitely lifted into the air.

The rather vertical descent of the club suggests, on the other hand, that the nature of the blow was downwards, thus imparting back spin ; but the subsequent lift, while the ball was on the club face, would seem to ensure a controlled flight. This at any rate appears to explain the intention of the shot. The eventual lift conveys not only the idea that controlled flight had been obtained, but that, by so playing the shot, its strength had been found by the guiding touch of the fingers of the right hand. Little turf should be taken ; and, indeed, when the shot is successfully played, the turf under the ball is only grazed or scraped by the edge of the sole of the club.

From a close lie such a clean shot cannot be essayed. The player will feel himself placed between the devil and



Short Niblick Approach : Address to the ball.





Short Niblick Approach : Back swing.



Short Niblick Approach : Finish.



the deep sea. It will be difficult to force the ball to rise abruptly; and the embedded position of the ball will render it practically impossible to apply stop cut. The only way out of the dilemma will be to play much the same stroke as has been explained above, with the provision that the wrists should be stiffer, the grip tighter, and that the ball should be exploded out of the depression by striking the turf firmly behind it. Then the ball will be ejected by the disturbance of the ground beneath it, in much the same manner as it is forced out of the heavy sand of a bunker. By employing a coarse method such as this, the player need not expect a brilliant result, but should be thankful if he succeeds in placing the ball somewhere upon the green.

The discovery of a lie of this last description upon a well-kept course should theoretically be confined to those occasions when an unpardonable excursion to the rough has been made. But even in the rough you may now and then find your ball cocked up upon a flimsy tuft of grass. If the pitch is played upon the above lines, the golfer may find, when the stroke has been completed, that the ball subsides gently into the divot mark which the club has just made. This is known technically as 'fluffing your shot.' There is no experience in golf more maddening than this. No real reason existed why the player should not have taken full advantage of what was in point of fact a fortunate lie. It will need some strength of mind to refrain from the attempt to put back spin upon the ball. Two alternatives present themselves. If it is not essential to stop the ball within two or three yards of its pitch, an exceedingly simple shot may be played. It will rise to a fair height and drag perceptibly when it lands on the green. Stand behind the ball and

hold the club fairly short. Ground the club lightly and swing with stiff wrists. Keep the club head low during the back and down swings, and lift the ball cleanly from the tussock of grass with the natural loft of the club, judging the strength of the shot so that the ball descends more or less where it was intended to fall upon its first bounce. The stroke itself does not require any great skill, only that quality which is associated with 'a good eye,' because the chief dangers against which to guard will be either topping the ball or striking too soon the pinnacle of grass upon which it was perched.

The other alternative—and it should not be lightly undertaken—is to attempt a sheer back spin shot; that is to say, a stop shot without any side spin on it. From a teed up lie it is possible to pull the ball up on its second or third bounce in a straight line after it has pitched. It is needless to remark that this stroke could not be played even from an ordinary lie without grave risk, unless the player had specialised in it. From such an elevated position as the one we are discussing, a cut shot will more often than not produce a socketed stroke of the worst type. Take up the stance more in front of the ball and play exactly the same shot as that described in the case of the ordinary short niblick pitch; except that you must on no account permit the back swing to ascend outside the line of direction, nor descend in any other path than that which is absolutely straight and true to it. The follow through also must not proceed towards the left of the hole, but conform exactly to the back swing, so that the club head finishes in the actual line of play. Grip the club strongly with the left hand, and by means of this hand hold the finish decisively as soon as the ball has been clearly struck. It would be unwise to attempt

to lift the ball into the air ; rather should the hit be made down at the ball. Concentrate solely upon the application of back spin. The ball will rise sufficiently of its own accord ; and if the stroke is played aright, the spin upon the ball will more than make up for any absence of height. Endeavour above all to take the ball clean.

Finally, the chip with a niblick or mashie niblick from a shallow pot bunker may be broadly explained. If the ball is lying moderately well it should be possible to place the ball close to the hole. It will be necessary to stand well over the ball and in front of it. The grip of the forefinger and thumb should be especially pronounced. The style of execution is that of a run up shot, in which the face of the club is kept square and the loft reduced by holding the hands in advance of the club head. The shot will be more certain if the wrists are kept stiff and a kind of push shot is attempted. Any touching of the sand before the club face meets the ball will wreck the stroke completely. It is only after the ball has been dispatched that the blade of the niblick may enter the sand. There need be no follow through ; and it is only the basic principle of hitting the ball first before the sand is disturbed that need be kept in mind. Far from a running shot being the result, the ball will shoot low out of the bunker ; but when it strikes the green the remainder of its progress will be in the nature of a skidding motion, until it finally pulls up sharply, as if it were on a string. Confidence is all that is required, and if the player succeeds in this niblick chip the conviction will immediately strike him that one of the peculiarities discovered in playing out of sand is that under no other conditions is it possible to impart such a marked degree of back spin.

Several other shots, more complicated than the examples which have been given, will be discovered in the practice of short approaching. Indeed, in this department of the game profitable openings for fancy play occur repeatedly. Unlike the sterner aspect of practical necessity which is presented in the case of iron play, the mashie and the niblick provide an opportunity to do or die. Frequently they are the instruments of recovery, and desperate means must be adopted in desperate circumstances. Time and again the fancy shot must come to the rescue if aught may be achieved. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the match-winning quality is a combination of two things—in the first place the ability to pitch, and afterwards to hole the short putt.

CHAPTER VIII

ON PUTTING

THE concern of this chapter is with a game within a game. As soon as the green is reached, a new set of conditions is introduced. It is no longer a question of distances. There was something almost noble in the game up to this point, compared with what now becomes rather a finicky business. At least that is the way in which it often appeals to many proud strikers when they come back to luncheon complaining that too much importance is given to the putting. But there it is. The millstone is hung round our necks, and we have to make the best of it.

After all, the game would be nothing without this troublesome business round the hole. But for this need for some very accomplished work on a smaller scale, it would be practically impossible to distinguish between a vast number of fine players who may almost be said to make it an invariable habit to reach any green in two strokes or less. This is an outstanding feature of first-class golf that, no matter what the lie or the difficulty of the stroke, there is scarcely any limit to the powers of recovery to put the ball on the green. The aristocracy of the game can play over club-houses, out of ditches, and from the centres of gorse bushes with the same degree of accuracy as the ordinary player displays from a comfortable position on the fairway.

The putting green delivers the final verdict ; and it is an act of relentless golfing justice that here, where Jack is as good as his master, the last word is said on the matter.

It is difficult to deal with this part of the game in the same way as with the others. Theories are as thick as blackberries ; but the golfer primarily asks for results. There is one thing and one thing only to be done, to knock the ball into the hole ; and so long as this object is achieved, the method of doing the deed may be positively immoral. I have even known a professional who was reduced to such an extremity that he expressed a readiness to putt with his eyes shut if only he could find the hole successfully by these means. Luckily he struck a better patch just in time, which saved him from this last stage of ignominy. The awkward part about it all is that the ball must be made to behave in a conciliatory manner if blood matches are to be won. For a successful issue out of a championship week the best of conduct must be observed on the putting green from start to finish : the five-footers must be accurately holed with the fewest exceptions, and it is on the green that the final and exhausting strain tells its tale. Certainties cannot be relied upon by even the most impeccable artists. An uncertain patch for no more than a couple of holes can do all the damage that is required, and this is especially the case where the issue in our championships is decided over a round of eighteen holes. It is just the recognition of this fact that causes so much agitating worry, the knowledge that a lot of fine work may be thrown away on the green by mere fractions of an inch. Even the most confident cannot escape forebodings of evil ;

and that, I believe, is the reason why earnest players accumulate such vast collections of what are presumably at the moment the one and only things to putt with. They take a putter out of the rack and say they could not miss a putt with this one—here is the perfect putter. Studies become well-furnished armouries, and new discoveries are always forthcoming. Still there are desperate occasions when recourse has to be made to old favourites which have done great deeds. At a pinch they are brought out of a temporary banishment, and it is surprising how often they answer the call and justify the demands put upon them.

Much could be written on the finest patterns. The connoisseur has a sneaking love for the oldest of all, the wooden head built on the same lines as the old drivers. Whereas the drivers of olden days now only possess an interest as museum specimens, the presence of an old wooden putter in a player's bag excites a feeling of reverence, and might even disconcert an opponent on the green by a sense that its happy owner held thereby an unfair advantage. The lines of the perfect model appeal to the expert's eye as convincingly as those of a sailing-boat to an experienced yachtsman. The head is long in the nose, and its upper side curves beautifully from a graceful swell at the centre of the face down to its margins. The face itself is distinctly thin and shows unmistakable signs of ancient lineage. The shaft is none of the poker variety, but curves gently in a slight bow away from the player. Its second cousins are made of other materials, aluminium and the like, and may be dismissed as useful implements for their purpose, but with no special distinction. You can love a fine wooden putter,

though you cannot putt with it. The other sort may behave beautifully, but they are never more than mere workmanlike instruments employed for the job.

Now the steel putters are all in the same family. Their features may not be all straight, their necks may even be twisted, but you do not on that account reject their claims. Here again the connoisseur falls back on the older models. They see no peculiar virtues in the innumerable variations which crowd the market. In fact they tell us that nothing is so hard to find as the perfect blade. I was shown a model which its fastidious owner had by a fortunate chance come across in Scotland. It fulfilled to his mind all the requirements which his soul yearned for, and what is more, it forthwith performed all that was expected from its balanced lines. It was straight in the face, and the face was of a good length. It was set at a perfect angle to the shank, and it lay on a fairly wide sole from which both faces rose at the same angle to a comparatively narrow ridge at the top. Nothing could have exceeded its perfect simplicity. It had no kinks or strange inventions. Just a fine piece of metal, straight as a die in its setting and free from all affectations. Such a club is regarded and admired as a good comrade, and the confidence begotten from such a relationship may well inspire that important essential—confidence upon the green itself.

The shrewd observer can detect the subtle differences of putting style at a glance in the way the ball runs after it has been struck, and even in the way it leaves the face of the putter. The distinctions between the putting of individuals is as unmistakable as the differences of their handwritings. All players have some basic characteristics which hold them powerless in

their grasp, try how they may to get away from them. To the born putter this part of the game is easy. He never seems to labour the matter. It is second nature to him to strike the ball in a beautiful manner. Putting indeed may be learnt, but it is not needful for him to learn it. Already it lies in his bones, or rather in the tips of his fingers. This natural putting which I have in mind I should describe as the classic putt, and I associate it particularly with the wooden putter. The ball runs up to the hole with an ideally smooth motion as if it hung on a thread. The straight face of the club sweeps it evenly away from the place where it was resting. There has been no slackness in the stroke, yet the ball leaves the club slowly, almost reluctantly. The movement of the club is purely natural. It travels low to the ground, both in the back swing and on to the finish, in a path which is not mathematically straight, but rather in the nature of a wide curve. Above all, the ball is definitely struck. It is firmly dismissed upon its journey: it is not scraped up to the hole. The grip is generally a divided one. The hands are separated so that the right hand may do most of the work; this enables the club head to be kept appreciably lower. Moreover, the left hand may be, if anything, rather under the shaft than over it, and the right hand is also slightly underneath. The blow which is delivered is a level blow, which causes the ball to glide over the green with the least possible desire to disturb its surface. At the same time it is remarkably free from the influence of either top spin or drag.

For the less fortunate individual who finds this part of the game a thorn in the flesh, and who is compelled to labour heavily over the process, some essentially work-

manlike method must be adopted. He may get the ball into the hole, but he putts less naturally. The difference in the running of the ball is at once apparent. There is not the same purposeful freedom of motion. It moves in a more sober manner over the ground. Still the ordinary person is thankful for satisfactory results, however they are obtained, and he has the additional consolation that the artistic putter is not by any means the best holer out. The ball may often run up to the hole very prettily—and stop outside. The more coarsely hit ball may not be the same pleasure to watch, though it will none the less gratify the striker by disappearing over the brink.

Having described what I consider the classic type of putting stroke, it becomes necessary to consider that class of player to which most of us belong—the less naturally gifted golfer, who has to evolve his own method almost artificially, since, inasmuch as it is not a second nature to him, he must manufacture a style which will serve the purpose.

There are two courses open. It would be possible to supply a series of practical suggestions in the nature of ‘tips,’ some of which might be found of temporary use. But the danger of this policy is that every tip has a special vice attendant on it. If it suddenly fails to give satisfaction—as it inevitably must in course of time—the search must be made for a substitute. In this way a vicious circle commences and no solid foundation is ever obtained.

The preferable plan to adopt is to discover certain underlying points of excellence which are common to all the best putters, and those more particularly who use a cleek putter.

There are four common principles which could be

mentioned. It seems advisable to keep the club head moving as low to the ground as possible throughout the stroke. In the second place, the wrists and arms should combine to effect this object. If the action is made entirely with the wrists as if the two hands were, so to speak, confined in one glove, there is bound to be a marked upward motion in the back swing and also in the follow through. If the endeavour is, as suggested in the first point, to keep the action low to the ground, the hands must descend to a certain degree in the backward journey of the club head. The hands do not necessarily remain in exactly the same position, but move through a space of a few inches. The wrists bend sufficiently to prevent the movement being directed entirely by the arms, in fact there need be no undue restriction, such as is likely to occur if the wrists only, or the arms only, take on themselves the whole responsibility of the stroke.

In the third instance, the path of the club head as viewed from above is maintained in as straight a line as possible to the hole. For short putts, this straight path can be kept absolutely, but for the longer a slight divergence may be necessary. This principle, however, should be definitely kept in mind. Lastly, the blade is kept square to the line. These last two points, in fact, go together. In cleek putting it is advisable not to turn the face of the club away from the ball or to allow the club head to describe anything of the nature of a curve round the legs.

Three particulars are worthy of notice in which the best putters exercise their own discretion. Length of swing varies. Some prefer a long, smooth, withdrawal of the club head, others cut it as short as possible. Similarly in the follow through you may get

a variety of styles. There may be no follow through, which suggests that the ball is 'stabbed' or 'bolted' for the hole, or you may see a follow through which is even longer in proportion than the back swing. Both methods seem to work well, but possibly the soundest ideal to aim at is to observe a happy medium of back and forward swings. And also opinions differ as to the preferable portion of the club to putt off. It is said that the best users of the wooden putter invariably putt off the toe of the club. With the cleek putter it is held by some that this practice gives a firmer control, while other excellent performers on the green use nothing but the heel. Against these preferences it might be urged that there is nothing much the matter with the centre of the blade, and most players certainly aim at striking the ball with this portion of the putter, though they may deceive themselves by imagining that they always carry their object into actual practice.

From these remarks it may be gathered that the ways of using a cleek putter are of many shades and descriptions. But to leave the investigation at this point would be bewildering for any practical purposes. The reader might like to have something definite to go on; at any rate, one or two examples which might be useful for experimental purposes.

There are roughly only three ways of striking the ball on the green. It can be hit slightly upwards, slightly downwards; or dead straight, so that it passes quite evenly over the ground. These differences may be almost imperceptible to the ordinary spectator, but they are none the less real and can undoubtedly be felt in the intention of the player himself. I would also mention that certain very excellent putters, pro-

fessional and amateur, could be quoted as examples of these methods.

(1) *The Lifted Putt*.—The ball is felt to be helped over the surface of the ground, as if the design were to assist it over the immediate six or twelve inches in front of where it lies. As applied to the longer distances, the stroke is played almost in the manner of a pitch and run so far as the intention is concerned. It is not meant that such a shot with a putter is possible, but if the idea in the mind is to get the ball on to a fixed point half-way to the hole, there is just that sense of a slight lifting of the ball which we wish to describe. The stroke is a very clean one, with some 'nip' in it. The ball is kept well on the line, and the only disadvantage which may exist lies in the necessity of very neat and accurate playing. Any failure in this respect may result in a catch in the ground, which will sufficiently mar the effect. The short putts are almost pitched into the hole with a sharp tap, the left hand apparently doing most of the work with a smart motion of the wrist.

(2) *The Level Putt*.—The ball moves off the face of the club in a plane which is exactly horizontal. The putter itself keeps low to the ground both in the backward and forward swings. The effect appears to be that of a perfectly simple division of the ball from the ground, and this gives it a free and straight-forward motion. In playing the stroke the feeling is that the club head is directed from one point at the end of the back-swing to another point at the finish on the line to the hole, with a very decided intention that the ball is little more than an incident half-way through the stroke, and that everything depends on the firmness and accuracy of line which is maintained.

In order to keep the necessary level nature of the stroke, the left hand must not bind the shaft too firmly. The right hand must have the greater liberty to take back the club head in what appears to be a slightly downward direction, and also to be able to produce the stroke towards its finish in a similarly low position. It may be easily discovered by experiment that, if the left hand takes too great a control of the club, this intention becomes extremely difficult of execution.

(3) *The Squeezed Putt*.—The ball is struck more in a downward direction. It is kept in closer contact with the putter and the ground; and this degree of squeeze or bite strongly appeals to those who prefer the feeling of a maximum amount of control. Carried to an extreme this class of putt is suspiciously like a jab, which has the worst of reputations as a putting stroke. Still, in all fairness it must be conceded that some players who bring the club on to the ball and stop it on the very spot where the ball lay, or a fraction in front of it, are remarkably good holers out. It is distracting to have to admit such unorthodox facts; but it certainly suggests that a player is justified in being a law to himself if he finds that his method is effective, although opposed to the advice of the critics.

But this class of putt need not be in any sense a jabbed stroke. It can be entirely orthodox. The loft of the putter is reduced so that the shaft inclines forward to an angle of about 80° to the ground, and the club head is brought on to the ball from as low a position as possible in a slow, sympathetic movement. The hands are allowed to move forward, after hitting the ball, in the direction of the hole, thus keeping the ball on the club for a longer period of time. Indeed,



Putting : Facing the club head in front of the ball.



Putting : Final position of address.





Putting : Back swing.



Putting : Finish.



the object is to keep the shaft of the club perpendicular after the ball has been struck for as long as possible, and to prevent at all costs the head of the club cocking up too soon. The left elbow had better go forward with the left hand, as it will thereby assist in keeping the blade square to the direction, which must be a primary consideration throughout.

For short putts it is well to take the line from the hole straight back through the core of the ball and to concentrate on the exact point at the back of the ball, which has in this way been determined. Fix the eye on this point and bring the putter straight on to it, making sure that you hit the ball on that minute point before you look up. Do not think of following through. There are only two things to keep in mind after having once got the line: hitting the exact point on the ball which you intend to strike, and keeping the blade quite square to the line at impact. It may also be mentioned that great harm can arise from getting to the ball too soon. A measure of deliberation has much to do with the secret of smoothness. And with regard to the maintenance of a square face to the ball throughout the swing it may be found that a finger grip of the right hand can interfere with this necessary adjustment of the blade. It is my experience that this part of the business is best relegated to the left hand; and the shaft may conveniently lie against the root of the right forefinger and not be held too tightly within the grip of its extremity.

So far we have made no mention of the stance and the balance of the body. With the best natural putters, by which I mean those who employ an evenly balanced swing, the weight is evenly distributed and the stance is generally narrow, with the player standing

well up to the stroke. But if a more severe method is adopted, with the swing kept as short as possible, there is an advantage in keeping the stance fairly wide with the weight forward. The point of this is, that it helps to secure the steadiness of the body, in that, the weight having already been put well forward on to the left leg, the body cannot itself very well move much further in that direction. That the body should remain as still as a graven image during the act of striking is perhaps the one great essential for successful putting. The slightest upsetting of the balance in a forward direction will almost certainly result in a push out and leave the ball on the right of the hole. Looking up too soon has the same effect. The head has gone forward and with it a little extra weight on to the left foot. This fact is not as generally recognised as it might be, and serves to emphasise the importance of each foot carrying just the same proportion of the body's weight as it carried at the commencement throughout those precious seconds during which the striking was being done.

Then how should one stand with regard to the position of the ball? This question is largely bound up with the character of the putter, whether its face is straight or whether a lofted cleek putter is used. I do not know of any wooden or aluminium putters with a face lofted to the extent of that of a cleek putter, so that the position in the address to the ball with these flat-soled clubs may be regarded from the one point of view. The object in their case is to strike the ball absolutely in the centre of the swing, so that only one position is admissible, namely, that in which the shaft of the club, when the face is laid behind the ball, forms a right angle with the line to the hole. The

straightness of the face is intended to dispatch the ball on the line as evenly over the ground as is possible, and the same reasoning applies in the use of the straight-faced steel putter. Speaking generally, no difference of method need be employed with straight-faced putters, whatever the material may be of which they are built.

But directly a degree of loft on the blade of the putter enters into the problem a new set of conditions arises. A lofted club would naturally be used to negotiate a stymie, but normally the idea of lofting the ball on the green is absent. Why then a putter with loft on its face? The usual reply would be to impart 'drag' to the ball. It is quite true that the use of loft can give drag, or in other words, a skidding motion to the ball, which prevents its turning freely on its axis for a foot or so after it has been struck; but after that point the ball recovers its equilibrium and rolls in a normal manner. It is only possible to skid a ball for a short distance, but the effect is materially to reduce the pace of the ball. To putt with skid certainly enables the player to hit more firmly by delaying the run of the ball for the first part of its journey; only that in so doing, smooth running is discounted and inequalities in the surface of the green produce an accumulated effect.

But many of the best putters who use a lofted cleek employ it in a different manner. When they finally place the blade behind the ball, the hands are held forward to such an extent that the loft is done away with. What is the reason of doing this rather than using a straight-faced club in the first instance? For one thing the balance of the body is not so likely to be affected. The follow through, what there is of

it, is practically completed before the club head has reached the centre of its arc. There is little inclination to sway forward in this case, much less so than when the ball is hit during any section of the swing at or forward of the central position. If the follow through enters almost entirely in the forward motion, the body has a strong inclination to follow suit, and the balance has been disturbed. There is also another advantage felt in this address by players who experience a greater degree of control when their hands are in front of the club head. To them there is a distinct feeling of loss of control as soon as the club head passes in front of the hands; so that they adopt a method which enables them to get, as it were, the ball on the face of the blade early in the swing and push or drag it with a forward motion of the hands in the direction which they have already mentally outlined.

So much for the technical side of putting. It would, however, be a great mistake to overlook the mental factor, which has such an important bearing on results. Too much attention to the hole itself, especially in the longer putts, is not to be recommended, except so far as it forms the terminus to a road which has to be visualised as clearly as may be. If the ball can be induced to keep to the track which has been mentally figured out, what happens at the end of the journey need not be over-emphasised. All that can be reasonably expected is to give the push off on the right road with sufficient running power to drop into the hole should it encounter this desirable obstacle. If this end is kept steadily in view without considering all that is going to happen on the way, you can safely trust to luck for the rest. Only in putts at very short range is it advisable to regard the hole as an objective

isolated at a certain distance and to play for it, if you like, as for a target. As to the question whether it is a better policy to play for the back of the hole or just to play for the correct strength to enable the ball to tumble over the near edge of the hole, the choice is best left to the individual. It is entirely a temperamental matter. The more summary method appeals to one, and another prefers a greater degree of finesse. The state of the green may also exert an influence. The danger of going out of easy putting distance on a slippery green may very well suggest the alternative of trickling the ball up with a nice discrimination. On slower greens to play to reach the further side of the hole is the more profitable course to adopt.

But after all is said and done, perfection of method is of little avail if the player is prevented by the disposition of his mental balance from putting it into successful execution. There must be no hesitation when the stroke is in actual progress. The head of the putter must know its own mind and must move quite definitely from the one point straight through to its legitimate conclusion without wavering or wagging *en route*. We all know the devastating effect of a strong wind on the putting green, when it is blowing so hard that it is almost impossible to control the movement of the club. The fingers seem to possess little power to keep it on the straight way, and the head of the club is only brought on to the ball with the utmost difficulty in a series of painful jerks. There is also the wind of the emotions, when an attack of nerves at a crisis may exercise much the same influence. The club head flutters on its way as if it were suddenly suffering from a strange reluctance to meet the ball. It swerves like a frightened horse at the sight of it,

shies violently for the moment, and then with a desperate resolution remembers its duty. But that hesitation, that momentary panic, has done the damage. It is a thousand to one against a recovery in time, and if by some extraordinary effort it regains the path it had temporarily forsaken, there is abundant cause for the most profound thankfulness. The moral of which is, that at a crisis indecision is fatal. Rather than that, be audacious.

CHAPTER IX

IMPRESSIONS OF AMERICAN GOLF

IN these days, when sport looms large in the public eye and is even conducted upon a scale of international rivalry, golf has by no means lagged behind in popular favour. France has for many years been represented in our championships, and other countries have also played their part ; but it is only recently that American golfers have sprung to such great prominence as almost to threaten our golfing supremacy. In the summer of 1920 I had the good fortune to accompany Lord Charles Hope and Mr. Cyril Tolley in a golfing expedition to the United States, and we had ample opportunities to study the American amateurs playing on their own courses and engaging in important matches among themselves. It was both interesting and illuminating. It is true that crowds of spectators watched their play on the links of Hoylake and St. Andrews last year, but not many keen followers of the game in this country have recently been privileged to see them similarly engaged under their own conditions ; and it is there, I think, that they are to be seen at their fullest advantage and displaying their real genius. For this reason I have ventured to introduce a chapter on American golf, even if it only professes to be little more than a record of the impressions which I gathered there, together with occasional references to the

methods of British golfers, in so far as they present a contrast to those more generally employed across the water. These comparisons, I might mention, will deal only with amateur players unless a statement is made to the contrary.

At the outset I should like to make it clear that my attitude is not that of an alarmist, but rather that of a sincere admirer of American golfers and of the grand manner in which they play this game of difficulties. We enjoyed a unique experience in seeing our friendly rivals make the game look supremely easy upon their own intricate courses. It was possible to observe their methods with some care while they were contesting their own Amateur Championship; and I am not overstating our feelings when I say that we received something of a shock on that occasion. The prospect of a successful invasion of this country no longer appeared an unlikely event. The Final was in some ways the most impressive display of golf I have witnessed; and it is no exaggeration to describe the golf of Mr. Evans and Mr. Ouimet as not only brilliant, but brilliantly consistent. Against Mr. Evans that day par golf was worse than useless; and although Mr. Ouimet stuck rigidly to the correct figures, he was beaten on the twenty-ninth green. In this way the favourable rumours of American golf were verified with a vengeance, and we Englishmen returned home in October much chastened in spirit, and convinced that we had seen amateur golf played in the manner of the best professionals.

The next year the American batteries were unmasked at Hoylake and St. Andrews; and although the result did not lead to Great Britain's complete discomfiture, it became evident enough that the United

States had of recent years built up a first-class school of golf without the assistance of very old traditions or the advantages which we are supposed to enjoy in this country.

The record of the Americans' achievements last summer may be briefly reviewed. They won the Amateur International Match without the slightest difficulty. It would indeed have been a triumphal procession had it not been for Mr. Tolley's fine performance in the top match, which did much to restore our confidence in view of the Championship during the following week. America outplayed us in the foursomes. Here, at any rate, we might have been expected to hold our own; but tradition availed us nothing. As a distinguished golfer remarked with some justice after the foursomes that morning, 'Duncan and Mitchell should have played Evans and Jones.'

The Amateur Championship title was retained on these shores, and our fighting spirit worthily upheld by Mr. Tolley, Mr. Graham, Mr. Darwin, and others, who did great execution in the American ranks. But it must in all fairness be said that at no time during the week did our adversaries display anything of that form which won for them the International Match of the previous Saturday. Either they were stale, or the unfamiliar terrors of Hoylake had by then made their presence felt. At any rate, their severest critics could not maintain that they showed their true form, even in those matches which they succeeded in winning.

The Open Championship Cup has crossed the Atlantic for the first time, and the pride of British golf has been dealt a severe blow. The invaders were all there or thereabout, and they accomplished beyond the shadow of a doubt a very notable achievement.

This is how the situation in Great Britain stands in relation to American golf. For the rest, our amateur champion made a gallant effort to restore our prestige in the States, but climate and conditions were necessarily against him. Duncan and Mitchell were likewise unable to secure the highest honours in the American Open Championship. Britain had for the first time in the history of the game come off second best.

These are the bare facts of the case, and it seems probable that our golfing supremacy has been definitely threatened. In looking for the causes I can suggest that it is due probably to one of two things, or perhaps a combination of both. Either British golf has deteriorated, in that, despite a high standard of excellence, it is for the moment unable to create sufficient players of commanding genius; or the United States has actually produced, in their leading exponents of the game, players of a very exceptional merit. I do not believe that our present golfers of the front rank, professional or amateur, have maintained the standard of Vardon, Braid, or Taylor amongst the professionals; or that the level of Mr. John Ball and Mr. Hilton, when at the height of their fame, has been approached in the amateur ranks of to-day. Individual performances may compare in a favourable light with the exploits of the past, but that element of consistency, which is a part of real genius, is noticeably absent. One consideration, however, must be borne in mind, that owing to the far greater number of competitors engaged nowadays, golfing ability has developed into something of the nature of hit or miss. To survive these large fields demands a sustained brilliance, whereas steadiness of a high order of merit might in past years have proved sufficient for the purpose. Against this

it must be admitted that Hutchison, Barnes, and Hagen generally take it in turn to capture the various American championships in which they compete; and upon those occasions, when they have been debarred the highest honours, they have nevertheless secured places high up on the list. This fine level of consistency is also noticeable amongst the American amateurs. The title has been generally held amongst a small group, including Mr. Evans, Mr. Ouimet, Mr. Travers, and Mr. Gardiner. The victory of Mr. Guildford was not altogether a surprise, and the championship may be said to be well within the grasp of Mr. Jones, Dr. Paul Hunter, Mr. Wright, or Mr. Wood Platt, who hold distinguished positions in American golf by reason of the consistency of their performances. The same thing can scarcely be said of British amateur golf. It has been in a state of flux since the war, and the chief events have been of a very open description. There are indeed no certainties in golf; but British golf especially has recently been of a more uncertain character than usual.

It is because of this great virtue of consistency that American golfers are well worth a close study. They seem to have contributed something towards the determination of correct golfing methods. Their play has not developed on haphazard lines. With typical thoroughness they have sought to extract the essential principles of the various strokes and to establish a particular style. During the last twenty years they have learned their lesson from the practical examples of the great masters of the game in this country; and all that was known in British golf was transplanted to American soil by professionals who went to reside there or to compete in their championships. The knowledge stored up in books was avail-

able for their well-being or their undoing. They had no lack of material upon which they might build up their own school, and in the process of assimilation they seem to have exercised an admirable discretion.

In my attempts to lay stress upon the chief characteristics of American golf, it will be seen that the principles upon which they have worked are constructed upon the orthodox lines advocated in this country, but with this additional precaution, that they have endeavoured, as far as possible, to cut out the non-essentials—those golfing frills and unnecessary trick shots—which lead to the downfall of many a promising player, and to concentrate solely upon the perfecting of one special shot with each club. In this way the game is made easier, and there is no doubt that under American conditions and upon their own courses this simplification reaps its reward.

In the first place the courses conform to a type which we associate with 'inland golf.' The fairways are narrow or moderately so, and the drive in this case must always be straight. If excursions to the heavy rough flanking the fairway are indulged in, the penalty is usually the loss of a clear stroke, since the chances of a big recovery are reduced to a minimum. Owing to the calmness of the weather conditions the drive from the tee can therefore be reduced to a mechanical process, and clean, straight hitting may be employed time after time without the interference of disconcerting blasts of wind at awkward angles. Similarly, there is seldom occasion to make use of a cross wind in order to gain an extra yard or so with the wooden clubs. Straightness, therefore, is the outstanding virtue from the tee. The second shot is usually anything from a driving-iron to a mashie

niblick. The green is often built up upon a plateau, and is strongly fortified with deep bunkers, usually to the side, leaving a narrow opening for a running shot if it should be attempted. The American golfer as a rule finds the all-air route the safer, provided he can impart sufficient back spin ; and this is the stroke which he plays with the regularity of clock-work with all his clubs. He has developed this shot in such a manner that, provided he is a finished player, he can hit ball after ball with that gradually rising flight which denotes the application of back spin ; and since each shot is played easily he becomes a fine judge of distance. Those American amateurs, whom I had the good fortune to watch in their championship matches, seemed able at their best to pitch their full iron shots in exactly the right place with the precision of a professional executing a short approach. The back spin which they imparted had no side spin, so far as it was possible to see, and the ball upon its bounce proceeded in a straight line in prolongation of the direction of the stroke. If any slight error had been committed, the tendency might be observed for the ball to pull up upon its pitch from right to left. In Great Britain this shot usually comes in from left to right ; in fact, such a tendency is regarded as a hall-mark of good iron play. With a mashie niblick the amount of back spin imparted by the Americans is terrific, and I have seen Mr. Bobby Jones obtain this result without the assistance of ribs or slots cut in the face of his club. It is the practice of this one and the same shot with all iron clubs that has—up to a point—made the Americans perfect. Their attention has not been unduly attracted to those variations of stroke that delight the golfing critic here. The

lack of wind in which to hold up the shot may account for a certain absence of such artistic feats abroad, and the determination of the American amateur to stick sternly to business may dissuade him from attempting them.

One or two characteristics in the American manner of playing the game may be worth noticing. They are mannerisms, but they are a means to an end—the simplification of golf. Particularly noticeable is the minuteness of the waggle. The golf books and our instructors would have us believe that a judicious freedom in our preliminary address assists in loosening the wrists, and suggests something of the rhythmic requirements of the swing. I will not maintain that this embraces all the argument in favour of the supple waggle, but I would point out that any initial stiffness of the wrists would have worked off before many holes had been played, and that if the rhythm of the swing is not already present in the mind, the fullest waggle cannot recall it. What, then, is the importance of the waggle? Surely it is only this: that by waving the club slightly over the object ball it is possible to determine whether you are standing at your customary and comfortable distance from it, and whether your stance is in accordance with your meditated stroke. If this be the whole truth, then the insignificance of the American's preparation to strike the ball is sufficient for the purpose. On the other hand, the danger of the large waggle has not been generally recognised. It tends to disturb the balance of the body, induces a slackness of the right knee, unless care is exercised, and is inclined to exaggerate the turning movement of the shoulders and upper part of the body, which should only operate late in accordance with the relent-

less pull of the arms during the swing. The waggle, therefore, that some of the leading American players affect only serves the useful purpose of establishing a comfortable position and no more.

Connected with the address of the ball is the facing of the club, and on this point the accuracy and thoroughness of the Americans are again shown. The method we are accustomed to adopt is roughly this: When once the stance for the shot is taken, with every regard for direction, the facing of the club correctly may be said to become almost automatic, and it only remains, in the case of irons, for the face of the club to be turned out slightly in order to counteract a presumable turn of the right wrist at the moment of impact. This turning is a dangerous practice, and one which I suspect the Americans have partly rejected. Their way of regarding the matter is that if the club is first soled behind the ball in the proper position, the feet will of necessity take up their right stance, and any indecision at the last minute with regard to them will be in this way avoided. The Americans do not, as a rule, allow for the turn of the right wrist during the swing, but trust rather to the truth of its orbit during the stroke. They therefore place the face of the club at an exact right angle to the line of the shot. Such preliminary movements as are necessary before the striking of the ball are reduced to a simple formula by Mr. Bobby Jones. First he soles his club, looks at the line, and adjusts it accordingly. His feet fall into their places naturally. He lifts the club head and moves it over the ball once or twice, soles it carefully again, glances at the line and back again, and then swings without more ado.

Having dwelt on these minor but none the less

important details, which help to induce that frame of mind in the player necessary for the confident hitting of the ball, it will not, I think, be time wasted if we inquire into the nature of the American swing. The golf swing is always a difficult motion to analyse. Instantaneous photography has exposed, and at the same time ruthlessly exploded, maxims which were thought to be inviolate. It has also shown what has always been suspected, that there are many ways of executing an apparently perfect shot. The truth of the matter is that rhythm, and rhythm only, is the secret of correct timing. The American players appear to have approached the principles of rhythmic swinging from a sound and common-sense point of view. In order to compel the club head to a very high rate of speed at the moment of impact without sacrificing these sensations of rhythmic movement, they have allowed themselves, broadly speaking, to cultivate a large and deliberate back swing with a correspondingly long recovery in the follow through. By this method the club head is allowed in the all-important down swing ample time gradually to increase its pace until it reaches its greatest velocity at the moment when the ball is struck. There is a wide distinction between a punch and a slap, and it is in this particular that the Americans differ somewhat from us in their manner of striking the ball. In a punch the swing is necessarily a short one. The backward movement of the arm is of a secondary importance, provided that it is contained within the smallest limits. The power in a punch is developed at impact, and immediately afterwards. It is this irresistible push which contributes to the weight of the blow. The slap, on the other hand, is dependent upon correct timing for its

effect, and the greater the distance from the point of its delivery to its objective the greater will be its sting at impact. For golfing purposes the longer and more rhythmic movement is particularly suitable, because in no other game does any ball respond more readily to accurate timing than the rubber-cored ball. In order to hit it great distances the quality, that we know as sting, is of greater value than all the force of human physique applied in the form of a punch.

This, I think, is the argument in favour of the long swing. It may be criticised as tending to inaccuracy, but the difficulty of its manipulation can be overcome; and indeed has been overcome in the most convincing manner by our friends across the Atlantic, even taking into account the clemency of their weather conditions. In this country there is a tendency to discourage young players who are able, by the means of a long swing, to hit the ball sweetly with their more lofted iron clubs; and I am not sure that British golf is not being robbed of its individuality and natural grace by an insistence upon cast iron principles of rigid swinging, which only allow those in possession of abnormally strong wrists and forearms to secure the best results.

The most noteworthy points in the American swing—particularly with wooden clubs—are to be seen in the first movements of the back swing, the straightness of the arms throughout, the remarkable control of the body, and a certain litheness of the shoulders. It is at such an early stage of the swing as the very first movements of the club head that disaster may be spelt, because it is at that point that the preliminary impetus to the rhythmic motion of the swing is set in action. It is easy to see that at the commence-

ment of a long swing the faintest suspicion of snatching may ruin the best intentions afterwards. To take the instance of Mr. Ouimet, the club is lifted back for the first foot very low to the ground, and with the utmost deliberation, while as yet the wrists have not begun to operate. His left arm is straight even in the address; and it is this arm that initiates the swing from the very beginning. This slow movement may appear a trivial point upon which to lay especial emphasis, but it is none the less worthy of observation. Just as the speed of the club head increases gradually in the downward swing, so does the same rule apply with equal force in the upward motion. For that reason it is necessary to start as quietly as possible, or otherwise the final stage of the back swing will be conducted at too great a speed for comfort or efficiency. The top of the swing is reached with a taut left arm, and it is only the bend of the left wrist, without any bend of the left elbow, which has allowed the back swing to attain its full dimension. It is important to remember that the bend of the wrist has only been brought about gradually and smoothly until the final state of tension has been obtained.

At the top of the back swing there is no pause, only what may be termed a poise, sufficient to permit of the recovery of the club head and to start it forthwith upon its downward path without checking its momentum. The maximum speed at impact is obtained by a delayed wrist action, which means that the bend in the left wrist is not straightened out by the right hand and forearm until the last moment, when the final impetus is thus added. All this while the left arm has been as straight as a ramrod. The right arm then becomes rigid in its turn, and straightens out

in the follow through, until the pull on both arms becomes so strong that the necessary reaction ensues and the finish becomes absolute. The Americans make no particular attempt to retard the pace of the swing when once the ball has been struck, but allow the club to subside naturally over the left shoulder, even when the pull on the arms indicates that, for better or for worse, the shot has been played. In this way the rhythm of the swing is preserved throughout.

Body movement seems to be eliminated as far as possible. The hips are very firm, and the Americans stand well up to the ball. The chief movement seems to be left to the shoulders, which turn with exceptional freedom according to the requirements of the swing. To put it plainly, I think this may be chiefly accounted for by the fact that most of their players wear a belt and play in their shirt sleeves, which enables them to obtain their pivoting movement without unduly turning the lower portion of the body. They do not appear to move their heads in the slightest degree. It seems as if the whole mechanism works round a central column, of which the head is the only visible projection.

It is generally agreed that the most marked distinction between the play of professionals and amateurs is found in their strokes with the more powerful iron clubs. The difference is chiefly discerned in the flight of the ball. Amateurs seem unable to reproduce with any consistency the shot that starts low and gradually gathers height, until all its energy seems to be exhausted in the air, when it finally descends almost vertically upon the heart of the green, and definitely remains there. And it is this shot which the professional expert plays with unfailing regularity, and apparently without

thinking. It is second nature to him, and makes the game look very easy compared with the efforts of most amateurs. We have come to believe that part of the secret of this stroke lies in the compactness of the professional's swing, and in the strength of his fore-arms and wrists. You may judge, then, how great a surprise it was to discover that the American amateurs, by means of a long, free swing, were securing a similar trajectory and an identical type of shot. There are indeed many ways of doing one and the same thing.

One definite principle in connection with this particular iron shot holds good—that the ball must be struck first and the turf afterwards. This method of iron play applies even more in the United States than in this country, owing to the nature of the ground; because the turf, although it exists in abundance owing to watering and other precautions, consists of a coarse mat established upon a veritable bed of concrete. If turf is taken, therefore, before the club meets the ball, it is reasonable to suppose that a slight skidding of the iron head at once takes effect with a disastrous result. What is a wise precaution even upon our own soft and springy turf becomes a golden rule in the States.

Back spin, and the soaring flight associated with it, is imparted by means of a downward blow, and partly by what is more obscure, the retention of the ball upon the face of the club for a longer period than usual. If a golf ball moves up the face of a lofted club while it is being hit, it is obvious that a backward rotary movement of the ball takes place; and it is for this reason that the club face should be moving in a downward direction. It is also clear that the longer the ball has the opportunity of remaining in contact with

the face of the club, the greater will be the spin which it gathers during this process. To take the two types of shots. If the ball is hit while the club head is proceeding in an upward direction, the swing accords more with the loft of the club, and the ball is inclined to fly direct from the point of impact. But if, on the other hand, the swing is directed more abruptly downwards upon the ball, and at impact proceeds as low as possible, it must follow that the loft of the club allows the ball to remain a little longer upon its face. Taking as an analogy certain letters of the alphabet, the two most suitable examples seem to be, for the regular swing, a wide U ; and, as representing the swing that applies the most back spin, the letter L, so far as it can be adapted to the purposes of a golfing stroke. It is with this last style I wish to deal. To the outward eye there is little difference in the driving swing of the American amateurs from that which he employs with his irons, except that in the one case the ball is hit cleanly and in the other the turf is definitely grazed, if not actually taken. The slight waggle, the very accurate soleing of the club, and the straightness of the arms are principles which are still rigidly observed. The main differences are the transference of weight more on to the left foot, and perhaps a little more use of the right hand. In order to acquire the more direct downward action the stance is taken up with the ball rather nearer the right foot. The weight is distributed more upon the left leg at the commencement of the upward swing, in order to permit of the club being lifted up at a more acute angle from the ball, without in any way interfering with the straightness of the left arm. Furthermore I am inclined to think that there comes a stage in the downward swing, just

before the ball is struck, when the left arm as far as the wrist is practically pointing straight at the ball, and the bend in the left wrist itself has not yet been straightened. The ball is struck, and both hands follow through low in the line of flight without any deliberate straining or stiffening of the wrists. The reactionary pull of course becomes severe, but, in playing this shot, there does not seem to be the same studied effort to finish the sweep of the club head, probably because the use of the right hand has become more pronounced.

The virtue of this method of iron play seems to lie in the fact that the rhythm of the swing has been maintained in much the same manner as with wooden clubs, and that, owing to the still considerable length of the back swing, the slap has been administered rather than the more clumsy punch.

In the more delicate parts of the game upon the putting green the work of the American golfers was particularly to be admired. Their clean hitting and decisive holing-out made this alarming department of the game look comparatively easy. The firmness of their putting in this country was due in all probability to confidence gained upon the slower greens of their home links. There, the ball must be struck firmly for the back of the hole; and the danger of running out of holing distance is a contingency remote enough to be almost disregarded. In England they adopted the same method with slight modifications upon our shaven seaside greens, with the result that their holeable putts hit the back of the hole smartly in the centre and dropped into the bottom of the cup in due course without hesitation. It is quite conceivable that this quick and confident striking of the ball, with a further acquaintance of our glassy putting surfaces, might

have been replaced by our more uneasy methods. However, no flaw could be detected in their manner of wielding the putter. It was characterised by all that makes for sound putting: an immovable body, stiffish arms, and free wrists. The ball was hit with the clean tap which only the golfer who is sure of himself may administer. The whole procedure was a joy, even for jealous eyes to behold.

We are able to learn from this example little more than we knew already, unless it is to confirm the suspicion already present in our minds that the secret of putting lies in confidence; and that confidence once gained can overcome difficulties that might well appear insurmountable.

We may very well ask ourselves, how far do these principles of American golf apply to us who play the game under different weather conditions, and over differently constructed courses? The long swing in a gale of wind may be a slender reed upon which to rely; and it might reasonably be argued that we have developed our own styles of hitting the ball for the best of reasons, that no other way has been found suitable. It is a mistake, however, to be dogmatic, and in matters of golfing methods especially. In this perplexing game there are no final conclusions. The open mind is everything. I do not think we should, as a golfing community, close our eyes to the possibility that the methods of our rivals may help to develop our national style upon broader lines. There may be considerations of real interest and practical value in the American point of view.

To sum up, we have referred in particular to four details of method. The simplification of the waggle and, secondly, the accurate soleing of the club are both of

first-rate importance. No conditions can detract from their possible worth. Facing the club head true to the hole has the virtue of simplicity, although there will be no advantage gained unless the swing subsequently conforms with this initial accuracy.

Then again the rhythmic motion, which is bound up with the longer swing. Whether or not it is adapted to the variable conditions of this country, where sun, rain, and wind hold sway alternately, remains to be seen, in so far as its rhythmic advantages can be attuned to our shorter back swings and less adventurous finishes.

Finally, the back-spin stroke, which may well replace the cut shot. All the advantages are in its favour. With side spin, direction is difficult to obtain by any other hand than that of a master. We are over-much inclined to play for strength rather than for direction with our approaches. We must harden our hearts, hit the ball straight at the pin, and trust to the back spin to find the strength for us.

Perhaps the most instructive comparison of all lies in the respective attitudes adopted by the rival countries towards the game. Of the two—and I am referring to amateur golf—I think the American attitude is the superior. At least it is the more likely to secure the best results. Just as the confident golfer can almost dispense with method and effect miracles when the glow of inspiration fires him, so a business-like attitude may do much to eliminate those mischievous thoughts and rash intentions which are liable to upset the even tenor of a round. We are too prone to indulge our golfing fancy; and it even delights us to discover difficulties which sometimes do not exist. The wind plays havoc with our shots; yet in the spirit of adventure the misguided golfer seeks to chain

this fickle creature of the air to his chariot wheels, and exercises his ingenuity in attempting to make it serve his purposes by needlessly elaborate devices. In most instances he finds it an unruly subject, but years of experience will as often as not fail to convince him that he is dealing with too treacherous an element in the game to warrant idle liberties.

The American example in the usual avoidance of trick shots might often be followed with advantage. I believe I am correct in saying that the principle which they for the most part adopt is one shot with each club, and each shot hit in as genuinely straightforward a manner as is possible. It is true to say that the golfer who pulls off the big things in golf is often the player who is equipped with a greater variety of strokes than his opponent; but it is equally true that had it not been for previous errors he would never have had the need to resort to their use. As a means of recovery such shots are invaluable, but it would be wise to reserve them only for the desperate occasions. Kirkwood, who is rightly supposed to have more trick shots at his command than any other living golfer, chiefly impresses the onlooker, not by the exercise of these peculiarities, but by the magnificent safety of his tactics. In this connection I remember that a keen follower of the game was discussing with a famous professional the chances of a rising young amateur, and ventured the opinion that he had not sufficient shots in his bag. The reply was, 'He is none the worse for that.' And subsequent events proved the correctness of the remark.

What is known as 'shot play' can only reduce a round to a confused jumble of individual strokes, some excessively brilliant, and the others, in racing language,

‘nowhere.’ A good round is one that is accomplished by a logical sequence of the easiest possible shots, each hole being linked together by the solid assurance of complete steadiness. In the same way a good score is built up hole by hole, and the homeward half must not hang disconnectedly upon the outward. Play for your fours, and the threes will take care of themselves. It is in this willingness of the professional to take what the gods offer, as opposed to the amateur’s tendency to strive for brilliant results, that the wide gap dividing their prowess has come about. The American amateur is more like a professional in this respect, because he has succeeded in grasping something of the professional’s frame of mind, to play golf simply for necessity’s sake. For instance, he makes a habit of counting his strokes throughout the round of even a friendly game. Whatever else may be said for this custom, a vast amount of demoralising fancy play is cut out in the process. Such an attitude may indeed rob the game of many of its pleasures. The golfer who can play with his head among the stars, and attempt the game as it might be played in the Elysian fields, has his moments of sublimity. He may possibly never be efficient, but at any rate he never will be dull. Between the two alternatives there lies perchance the happy medium, and that may present at once a pleasant and a practical solution.

CHAPTER X

GIRLS AND BOYS

THE saying is that 'boys will be boys,' but I have never heard a similar platitude about girls. Which, on the face of it, might appear strange. But, indirectly, it expresses a certain truth, that of the two the boy is a creature of quicker development, and that he may become a remarkably active member of society at an unusually early age. I suppose the 'tomboy' is a blood relation; but this species of girl is nothing like as common as her brother. The boy 'gets going' infinitely quicker as a general rule, and he has much on his side to help him. He is pitchforked into school life comparatively early and is in that way toughened by the measures which his masters take to keep him busy. But, apart from this disciplinary training, boys are constitutionally much the stronger as a class. Perhaps I speak feelingly on this point, as I never suffered to any marked degree from that superfluous energy which is so characteristic of boys and puppies. My experience—and I think it is shared by the majority of my sex—proved that up to the age of sixteen or seventeen the conclusion of a round was at times wearisome; and, so far as golf is concerned, to play the game properly when at all tired is a hopeless task. That alone does not assist towards keenness.

There are the definite stages of age, when the full

round comes comfortably within a girl's capacity ; after that thirty-six holes, and beyond that again a further landmark when a full week's play without loss of form enters the realms of possibility. This slower development is, I am sure, the reason why girls are, generally speaking, nothing like so keen as the boys, who will play from morning till night, if they are allowed, without being much the worse for their exertions. A solid sleep quickly puts them on the same road again.

But you can see small sisters dropping out in their march round the links, while their masterful young brothers pursue their way with the utmost vigour, playing innumerable practice swings at unoffending daisies out of pure exuberance, in addition to those required by the game in progress. The girls simply cannot keep up the pace, and are on that account apt to incur from their youthful rivals unmerited reflections upon their sporting proclivities.

Some boys are peculiarly precocious. One that I know, whose name I would not breathe for worlds, was at a very early age promoted from the precincts of the ladies' course to the glory of a few holes on the men's. I would not go so far as to say that he was taken out of the perambulator and deposited on the first tee, but I am quite sure that he was seen off by his nurse with very full instructions suited to his age. The responsibility for the adventure was undertaken by his father, and in the course of the afternoon the pair managed to complete a round of three holes, each of them grimly played out to a finish. This leaves to the imagination the multiplicity of incidents—as the reporters call them—on the journey ; but it also serves to illustrate the pertinacity of the young boy when

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he is really bitten. After the match was over, I know that the parent was very much the more tired of the two.

To his unwearied persistence can also be added a remarkable capacity for observing what is called the rigour of the game. When blood matches became in due course the order of the day, I remember that the youthful enthusiast was challenged in a perfectly friendly spirit by a lady, whose handicap in the matter of years as compared with his own worked out at about forty. Everything proceeded smoothly in a close match until the sixteenth green was reached, where the lady was left with a putt, not exceeding six inches, for a half. The giving of this putt was relentlessly refused—and the lady missed it. The element of coldness which characterised the rest of the round was only felt on one side, and the boy won very comfortably.

Now a girl is not really equal to this sort of thing. In her case it takes years to acquire the ferocity of 'a full-grown tigress.' As a cub she is not in the running. But I will venture to suggest that, when the full development does come about, it comes very quickly: and when you get tigers and tigresses in their full strength, there is not much to choose between the intensities shown by them on those occasions when they are attending strictly to business.

There is another direction in which the boy beats the girl to smithereens. If he is badly bitten with golf, the collecting of birds' eggs is a mild disease compared with his appetite for golfing literature. From the start Roger was a profound student of all the works in our golfing library, and would seek to tear the truth from these classics whenever a weak spot in his game glaringly

declared itself. On his return from a round he would be quite likely to turn up an index for 'Putting, slice in : how to avoid,' and would restlessly anticipate the next game in which to apply his newly found secret. Although he expected me to display the same earnest application to golfing theory, I found that my brain was unequal to the effort, and in consequence I sank many degrees in his estimation. My feeble attempts to play the correct mashie shot—or, I should rather say, what at that time represented the latest theory of the correct mashie shot—were wont to call forth the despairing cry, 'Oh, Joyce, you will never play golf. You won't study the game.' It was rather severe to expect a mere girl of eleven to play mashie shots in the manner prescribed by J. H. Taylor.

Elementary treatises are of no earthly use to the true boy golfer of the scientific type. The advancement of golf has no terrors for him. On the contrary, he is eager to cover all the ground at once. You might as well ask him to read an edition of 'Robinson Crusoe' which confined itself to the story of how he left home. All forms of golfing enterprises appeal to his adventurous spirit. He would revel even in the disputations on the push stroke and plough up much ground in the practice of it. There would be few swings with which he would not experiment; and as to the respective merits of golf balls, there would probably be few shrewder judges, especially amongst the cheaper varieties, which would naturally appeal with greater force to his rather slender pocket.

The other type of boy does not take up the game in a professional spirit. He is chiefly concerned with the games he plays at school. He can scarcely find the time, even should he feel the inclination, to go at

all deeply into the matter. In his case, and the cases of young players generally, I should say, leave them alone to enjoy the game as they please. It is fairly useless to waste good golfing advice on young people who may quite likely regard criticisms which are unsuited to their years—and often very freely administered—as a form of tyranny from their elders, who will not allow them to take the game in their own way. After all, the reason they do a lot of things wrongly is simply because they cannot do them in the right way with the best will in the world. The hands cannot maintain the firmness of grip required, their wrists cannot resist the shock of impact, and the general looseness and inaccuracy of their play will never be remedied until they have gradually built up their strength by the happy-go-lucky practice of hitting the ball, which, if they are naturally keen, they will get in abundance. They can get heaps of fun over it and spend whole days over a healthy and innocent occupation in the fresh air. And the more play they get, the more quickly will they tune up their sinews to a point which will enable them to deal seriously with the game.

After all, it is remarkable how much a youngster can pick up for him or herself. A young Airedale dog of mine distressed me at first by satisfying his voracious appetite by a rather indiscriminate choice of diet, whenever he found the opportunity. But I was greatly comforted by a lady, who was extremely knowledgeable on the subject of Airedales, in her assurance that the best of them were scavengers, and that a little scavenging would do them no harm. The analogy will not, I trust, be resented, if I suggest that children can safely be let loose on the links—on their own reserved links if there are any, and if not, in quiet corners

out of the general line of golfing traffic—and they may very possibly pick up many bad habits. But in the long run these habits will do little harm, while all the time they will be hardening muscles which will eventually enable them to control their clubs with satisfactory results.

Holiday golf with us was always seaside golf. The inland variety was a more prosaic affair, too near our front door to yield the true flavour of irresponsible relief. Not that home links were devoid of their own natural charm, but our visits to them had a suspicion of the half holiday, which holds a very different place in the youthful estimation from the real thing. One never got really free on the inland courses from the inevitable association of work—not an excessive amount in our case—but yet work. Our tutors were selected in a wide and liberal spirit. Their scholastic qualifications took a secondary place. The primary inquiries related to their love for cricket and went even as far as the mention of golf handicaps.

Thus it came about that, when we were at home, golf, among other forms of sport, came to be regarded as a distinctly important part—and not the least enjoyable part—of our general education. Even the witnessing of important professional matches, when they took place within our reach, constituted a not unattractive feature in the educational programme, and on these occasions Roger was inclined to surpass himself. No football player could have kept ‘on the ball’ more closely; and I remember that in one *News of the World* Final, Mr. Croome, who was refereeing the match, was compelled to reprimand him for running. What would happen, he suggested, if the other spectators followed his unrestrained example? The

terrible picture of the referee compelled to beat back an advancing mob had its due effect, but did not deter the subject of his remarks from a recurring appearance in the very front row.

Both varieties of courses, those nearer London, marked by heather or undulating grass country, and those which are flanked by the sea, have each their appropriate charm ; but there is a distinct atmosphere attached to living for a few short weeks on the verge of close-lying grass refined by the salt-laden breezes ; looking out of the window the first thing in the morning to see the links calmly waiting to be played over, the hurried breakfast and the scurry to the club-house *en route* for the greater or lesser links, as the case might be. Also the knowledge that for some precious weeks there could be full indulgence in a game of engrossing fascination. Is it to be wondered at that sea breezes, gusty winds, driving rain, and above all seaside turf, take the first and favourite place in our memories ?

Every place conveys a peculiar sensation of its own when one is approaching its confines. The landmarks are familiar from yearly repetition and succeed each other with a regularity that is duly anticipated. A satisfaction is produced in the mind which may be said to resemble the prelude to a piece of set orchestration. We recognise the feeling of anticipation as it begins to ripen. The air has a new flavour in the lungs and the hills seem to open the gates which lead down to a haven of holiday at the end of a long last stretch of road. But not till the end of the estuary comes into view do we quite realise the proximity of simple streets and crude architecture, all very clean and fresh in the sea air ; and the final prospect of new kinds of tea

with ample bowls of cream, which somehow fit so perfectly into the fresh scheme of surroundings.

Our destination is a happy hunting ground, if ever there was one, for the young golfer. It supplies every conceivable requirement. Tracts of open down, where an essentially short game can be practised with the most juvenile sets of clubs as ever were invented and little danger to stray pedestrians; a most excellent ladies' course, on which youngsters can have their fling, so long as they observe the most elementary forms of etiquette; and finally the men's course, regarded with an almost sacred wonder, as demanding well-nigh unattainable heights of proficiency. It was not unlike looking through a deer fence with 'Trespassers will be prosecuted' writ in very large letters on the other side. There were formidable gentlemen on the committee, who had sharp eyes turned on the boys, not only as regarded the observance of the severely worded local rules, but also in such extraneous matters as forms of bird-nesting which came perilously close to the penalties enforced by the criminal code. Only ladies with magnificent handicaps could ever hope to play a shot on the enclosure sacred to the men; but precocious boys sometimes gained an anxious footing and were warily careful to avoid the slightest ruffling of the more impetuous of their elders.

My recollections of these links are chiefly associated with sheep, larks and daisies; the sheep were accustomed to lie about in the bunkers, and were voted a great nuisance. Their presence on the green was equally resented, even when the sight of a sheep rubbing its back against the flag reminded one of certain pictures familiar in books and stained windows. The larks enlivened the atmosphere; but under foot the blinding

sheets of daisies caused delays and irritation by their successful efforts to dazzle the searcher after golf balls. The water hazards too were narrow and deep and admirably placed for their purpose. At the points where they were most effective, the local children displayed an inexhaustible industry, while they assisted in searches which, owing to the swift current, might easily extend a hundred yards towards the sea. But perhaps the most exciting feature, after all, was a tangled triangle of holes towards the finish which included amongst the greens convenient thoroughfares for nursery maids and other traffic. The inhabitants possessed a rare courage and indifference in the face of danger, but putters on the seventeenth green and strikers from the last tee had the greater cause for alarm. A well-placed hook from another fairway could do infinite execution if it carried over both, and many a close finish must have been stimulated by the knowledge that accidents might very easily happen.

Only once have I seen a course played backwards. On an afternoon when driving rain had cleared the links of players, three young Oxonians essayed the task. The first shot was played from the neighbourhood of the flag-staff over the main road, and the last tee shot pitched on a public thoroughfare, ricocheted violently along it like a whiff of grape-shot until it came to rest in the gutter. From this position a gallant iron shot narrowly shaved the club-house, sailed down the road, and by the mercy of heaven safely found the home green. How attractive it would be if committees would occasionally reverse the order of going, and provide a day of rapturous excitement!

Another golfing haunt lies some eight hundred miles northwards and, needless to say, plunges us into a

scene where the game has firmer historic roots and has reigned without a rival for generations. Here again the approach is very significant. After the milder air of the south, the brisker atmosphere of Scotland at once makes its presence felt, and the breakfast basket at Kingussie assumes the character of a most attractive banquet. In the early afternoon we catch a glimpse across a stretch of inland water of our ultimate goal scarcely more than six miles away ; yet a three hours' detour is necessary before we work round to its other flank. If ever there was a dog-leg line of railway, it is here, but the journey is worth it ; and we are not allowed to forego a formal introduction into Sutherland territory. When we change into the local 'express,' the speed does not forbid a deliberate observation of the intervening country. The plot soon begins to thicken. Fisher women and children, brilliant with the living marks of weather on their faces, crowd the platform with their activities, and finally we creep past the outlying holes of the familiar links, which lie sandwiched between the railway and the sea, into the homely terminus. Now to those who have not been there it is well to explain that on this historic ground ancient and modern are well blended. The heart of the borough has a distinct touch of the mediæval. The Cathedral is faced by the lofty turreted Bishop's Palace, while a wide square offers a spacious meeting ground for the community. On the higher ground, the national game claims a more modern setting.

Luckily, in these northern parts there was also a second course reserved for the activities of beginners and younger enthusiasts. Its architecture may have been a shade elementary, but the holes were long enough ; and provided full scope for the shots was

available without falling unpleasantly in the way of the more accomplished players, who were apt to become alarming to junior members when they crossed their path, it did not greatly matter where the green might be placed. The youngster is not fastidious about good lies. Even rabbit-holes are accepted with a good grace, and rather add to the minor excitements. Should the ball become entangled in low-lying shrubs, the search and eventual discovery added a pleasing variety, and the number of shots required to regain the fairway did not cause irritation if only the ball was finally extricated.

But when juvenile competitions were contemplated with an age limit of twelve years or so, a fresh venue had to be found ; and a short course of nine holes was extemporised over some hilly ground which lay in the neighbourhood of the bathing huts. Here it was that competitive instincts first loomed in sight. And can any child resist the allure, especially when the appeal is altogether fresh ? No matter what the prize may be, the contest is sure to be a keen one. Some benevolent lady put up trophies of toffee and Edinburgh Rock to reward the winner, under medal and bogey conditions, and never were subsequent fruits of victory as sweet as those early prizes. The rounds were veritable scrambles under these somewhat primitive circumstances, and must have taxed to the utmost the organiser's powers of calculation ; but the events themselves were fought out in a spirit of vast earnestness and enthusiasm. Besides, the tea interval on the beach was always a welcome diversion, and renewed any signs of flagging interest.

To turn to the greater course, which after the war claimed our whole attention, I know of no other links

which possess a more complete charm. The first six holes stretched northwards between a high natural embankment and the sea, where the prevailing slope of the ground and a narrow fairway demanded straight drives and well-placed iron shots. But the varying winds, which were generally blowing, increased the difficulties, so that, unless the greatest care was taken, full acquaintance was made with bunkers, depressions, and the belt of bents which lay along the shore. To allow for the force of these breezes supplied an endless variety of play, and that on a course which, without any wind at all, never ceased to exercise a golfer's full ingenuity.

All roads are said to lead to Rome ; and at one hole in particular there is a high line and a low line, and another in between—each of them hinting at disaster—which all tend to offer a perplexing problem in the endeavour to reach the distant green. I have known the inquiry made on the tee as to the alternative route which had been selected and the reply made, ' I am going the way I am sent.' Which indicated a wise and admirable trust in Providence.

For the last five holes you descend to lower ground, where the Grass of Parnassus daintily decorates the fairway. Here a broad burn takes a hand in deciding close matches, and the question of carrying it effectively helps to divide the sheep from the goats. The youth of the neighbourhood are incurable sea urchins, and love to lie in wait at the critical points for the non-floater. More than once a mashie approach has been known to have been duffed, not so much on account of the player lifting his head, as the consequence of an ambushed head suddenly popping up at the critical moment over the edge of the nearer bank. At the two

points where the burn must be crossed, there can assemble with the unerring instinct of the eagle a party of barelegged paddlers, whose powers of recovery of the ball depend upon the researches of their feet, and also very largely on the acuteness of those calculations which are said to characterise their race.

As elsewhere in Scotland, we discover a great golfing democracy flourishing in full vigour. Its scratch players must be treated with the utmost respect. Its inhabitants are the keenest judges of the game, and probably deliver judgments-in private which might be alarming if published abroad. But they have always been most kind to us ; in fact, I am sure that they hold themselves largely responsible for our education in the game. And has not our one and only golfing godfather hailed from these parts ? And could anyone have better credentials ? There is everything to make the game instructive and attractive. Bright air, skies of infinite variety and purity, marvellous colour in hills and sea, blues of every shade from indigo to turquoise, sunsets playing changes of light across the Firth and throwing glows of pink and orange over the foreground. The caddies themselves are barefooted creatures of the air and sea, crossing over the slopes from the adjacent fishing village like raiding bands of invaders, carrying their rations for the day and pausing on their return to criticise any stray players who are out overlate. With their flaxen hair and freckled cheeks, they look like veritable children of the Viking breed, and most of them carry their golfing knowledge into the Navy and overseas.

CHAPTER XI

MEN *versus* LADIES AND MIXED FOURSOMES

A FREQUENT comparison refers to the respective merits of men and women golfers. Except in quite ordinary games, the matter is rarely put to a practical test. The occasions on which exhibition matches between representative players have taken place are few and far between, and no very conclusive results have been obtained. Nor are they possible. You are dealing with such a variety of conditions that nothing but the roughest of estimates can be made in any attempt at a satisfactory generalisation. If men are pitted against one another, the question of particular courses, their lengths, and their general character is rarely taken into consideration. In matches between professionals there might be a deal of preliminary arranging as to where the play would actually take place, but a test of real skill over any good course taken at random would not be considered in any way unfair. A man would be expected to prove his superiority under anything resembling a first-class test; and the same thing might be said of a match between any pair of ladies. They would be expected to possess an equal chance of overcoming the existing difficulties. But the result of a meeting between a lady and a man would be seriously affected by the conditions of play, and taking a series of such matches over a diversity of

courses, the final issues would probably be of a conflicting nature.

Still the question is frequently asked, How many strokes can a man allow a woman in order to make a close game of it? And the answer is bound to be a vague one. For one thing the question is vague enough in itself; but I suppose the meaning amounts to this: whether the best man can give the best lady more or less than a half. Before it is possible to give satisfactory replies to the question, it is necessary to know where you are going to place the tees, what the general conditions of the course are, and some details of a similar nature. There would in reality be trifling difficulties in adjusting the length of a course to make the handicap anything you chose. It must not be forgotten that the proposal is very much the same as putting a heavy-weight and a light-weight boxer into the ring together; and I imagine that sporting experts would consider such a problem as possessing features of peculiar intricacy.

Perhaps I might be allowed to illustrate the discrepancies which exist by comparing one or two record rounds made on various courses, in order to show how material the differences I have indicated can be. The instances which I am able to give must necessarily be personal, as I know of no others which bear on the matter. Record scores, after all, constitute a very fair test of play. They represent roughly the best individual efforts over a number of years; and, although fortune may have played an unusually large part in their making, the fact remains that her smiles are distributed with some degree of impartiality and usually reward outstanding merit. On two representative courses over which my brother and I have played a great deal,

he has returned a score of 67 in each case. From the same tees I have managed, on either course, to do a 78 and 72, a difference varying as widely as 5 in the one case—which I admit was rather an abnormal effort—and 11 in the other. At St. Andrews also Roger has gone round in 69 and Miss Kyle recently returned a score of 81. This very clearly shows that, whereas the men may be regarded as remarkably consistent in their very best efforts, the ladies differ much more widely; and only one explanation can be given for the fact. The limitations, which are emphasised in the case of the ladies, are very decided, even though they are playing under no peculiarly disturbing influences of match play. The courses themselves make all the difference from the point of view of their achievements, and from purely physical considerations exercise an enormous importance.

Attempts to settle the exact degree of superiority held by the men have often been made in the form of team matches. The majority of ladies on these occasions appear weighed down by the seriousness of the proposition which is put before them, and there is no denying the fact that the conditions are not a little intimidating. To be consistently and severely outdriven from the tee, to be labouring with full wooden-club shots for the seconds when opponents are contented with irons, and when the holes are of medium length, to be compelled to play approaches from a point some twenty or thirty yards farther from the hole, makes the game a task of difficulty and demands much patient judgment to overcome the disadvantage. It is true that strokes are given to make up for discrepancies in length, but even the allowance made scarcely restores the necessary confidence when things are going none

too well. Instead of remembering the one important axiom of steadiness and playing comfortably within their strength, they cannot resist the moral effect of the opposing strokes, and try too energetically to maintain a pace which is too hot for their powers. A cool head is required to form a resolution under no circumstances to be hustled ; and, when once made, rigidly to stick to it. After all, much must be put down to lack of experience in these events.

For some years an annual match has taken place at Stoke Poges, in which the ladies receive a stroke at alternate holes, both in singles and foursome play, and up to date this allowance has not proved sufficient. In spite of this the expectation has steadily been gaining ground that the chances of the ladies on these terms are every year improving ; yet even in the last match which was played, when the ladies were considered to have put a stronger team into the field than ever before—including as it did, not only our own best players but also Miss Stirling, the American lady champion—they were decisively beaten. That result was not held to be entirely conclusive ; it was felt that, whereas the men did something of their best, their opponents never produced their highest form and ought to have more effectively extended the men.

Only in a few instances was a display worthy of their ability given ; and the fact goes a long way towards proving the correctness of Mr. Darwin's remark, that ladies are only to be seen at their very best when arrayed in battle against each other and competing for supremacy in their championship contests. It seems that the severity of the test in these events, and the fierce determination, which is attributed to them, of refusing to yield to their sister players except

at the last breath, assist to bring out the few extra ounces of class play which makes all the difference between going down in the early rounds or reaching the final stages. Be this as it may, it certainly appears that, when they play at Stoke Poges against the men, they are subject to a very serious moral disadvantage, which they find a difficulty in overcoming.

I have heard it said that it is a mistake for ladies to play from the men's back tees, on the ground that, by doing so, the hole loses its primary intention for them. A course consists of a certain proportion of short holes; and others, varying from considerable length to the medium distance, requiring a drive and an iron approach. Played from the back tees, such a course meets the requirements of the men. What happens if the ladies play from them? They have the short holes—which are not nowadays always too remarkable for their shortness—and the rest reach excessive proportions, from the point of view of their powers of striking. This may be said to ruin the intention of the course, so far as the ladies are concerned; and the argument might be developed so far as to stipulate that, when one particular hole is intended for a drive and an iron for a man, it should provide the same shots for a lady.

I can suggest an answer to this argument: that ladies as a rule do not mind a lot of wooden-club play through the green; it is a game that comes naturally and easily to them, and they would if anything prefer to peg away with wood rather than have to emulate the men with their irons. However that may be, team matches have been played on an allowance of distance; and in these cases, I believe, the ladies showed up better than when they played off the same tees as the men.

But the fact remains that it makes a much less interesting and less intense competition : it becomes a more lonesome game when the players part company on the tee and drive off in solitary state from their separate stations. The matches at Stoke are great fun, and it would be a thousand pities if the mixed warfare were taken too seriously or the ratios of mathematical discrepancy too closely insisted upon. The one thing that does count against the ladies on that course is that strength tells very considerably in playing the long iron shots up to the green. As I have already said, this is not a typically ladylike shot, in the sense that the lady rarely excels in the knack of hard hitting. The effect is rather devastating, when Mr. de Montmorency plumps the ball with his irons from long distances on to the green with the least apparent difficulty. That must, from necessity and admiration, be suffered gladly, in the hope that some day even a feeble imitation might come within one's scope. In the meantime, the only thing for the ladies to do is to steadily improve the standard of their game, chiefly by concentrating on the best models of iron play, and in the near future, by means of that half, to prevent the men from being tempted to take things too easily and to make them fight hard to escape the day of retribution.

So far we have discussed the opposition of men and women in match play. There remains the question of stroke competition. As far as I know, only one experiment has been made in an open competition when some form of comparison has been attempted with regard to medal play. At St. George's Hill ladies were invited to compete in a mixed field on the basis of their L.G.U. handicaps, plus an addi-

tional six strokes. Considering the meticulous care which is taken by the L.G.U. to avoid over-inflation in their handicap figures, I consider this extra allowance to be a very liberal one. I hope I am not speaking with undue optimism if I express the opinion that on these terms the first prize ought to be more or less of a gift to some lady who happens to be right on her game at the time. But this is primarily a handicap question, which is best left to the experts for solution.

The newest development in mixed competitions was recently inaugurated by the Worplesdon Club, when they organised a mixed Foursome Tournament on the lines of the better-known lawn tennis model. The result was an unqualified success, not only as a social function but also from the point of view of the high standard of play displayed by both parties. This came indeed as a considerable surprise to most people. As one player said—possibly with a touch of irony—the surprising thing was not so much how well the ladies played, as how their partners excelled themselves. At any rate, there is no doubt that all those concerned rose to the occasion and produced of their best. It could scarcely have been predicted, even by the most imaginative prophets, that within two days of Mr. de Montmorency establishing a competition record of seventy by quite exceptional golf, any mixed foursome couple would have made a habit of going out in thirty-six, and keeping up an average in the close neighbourhood of fours for most of the round. Yet this was done in several matches; and what is more, it was often necessary to produce this kind of golf to win.

It practically amounted to a mixed pair doing as well as a pair of first-class men, and went far to suggest

that the ladies must have at least played their short game as well as their partners, and, backed up by superlative assistance from the tee and through the green, were able to contribute a number of shots which were sufficiently good to keep the figures at a surprisingly low level.

This leads us to inquire where the difference in play actually exists. There is a wide gulf fixed at any rate by the one factor of physical strength. Only by handicap adjustment can equality be established, which at once rules out the possibility of too serious a rivalry. Only by shortening courses to an uninteresting length could even chances be brought about, and back tees are the very essence of modern golf, which demands long hitting. If, for the sake of argument, we take it for granted that no self-respecting plus man will fail nowadays in reaching a green with his second—this is an assumption made only for the sake of argument—it is possible to calculate on four fairly representative courses, which I have in my mind, the number of holes at which a good lady player would require three strokes to obtain the same distance. On two out of these four courses the number of such holes would work out at nine or ten. On the other two courses the lady would require three strokes at least to reach seven of the greens. Putting the short game as giving equal chances to both—again an assumption, which is arguable but not necessarily outside the realms of possibility—it becomes apparent that on the majority of courses, in point of strength alone, apart from questions of superior skill, a difference of seven to ten strokes enters into the case. If the reply is made, that an allowance of an extra six strokes in medal play has been stated to be rather in the ladies' favour, it

must be remembered that the systems of handicapping are at the present moment adjusted on different principles, with the result that a four handicap lady may as likely as not be in the same class as a man with a similar figure to his name. Or to put it otherwise, a four handicap man might find it difficult work to concede more than a modicum of strokes, if any, to a lady similarly placed according to her method of rating.

Taking everything into consideration, the only safe conclusion appears to be that, making due allowance for the severe or comparatively easy nature of any particular course, the correct odds between men and women who occupy similar positions in their respective ranks in regard of merit would work out between seven and nine strokes.

CHAPTER XII

OXFORD GOLF SINCE THE WAR

THE game of golf has spread all the world over ; five continents have surrendered to its charm, and lonely bands of enthusiasts have carried their clubs to the remotest corners of the earth. The day may not be far distant when Pacific islanders will boast of incomparable courses and openly avow them to be superior to St. Andrews as tests of first-class golf. Since the war the game has proceeded upon the crest of a wave ; painful memories have been partially drowned in the absorbing interest of playing golf, and its healing influence has restored the spirits of men and women to something approaching pre-war buoyancy. Oxford, too, has progressed in sympathy with this popular movement ; and the teeing grounds of the Frilford and Cowley links have been more crowded daily than ever before. The scholar has sought and found relaxation from his studies there ; the local courses have become the playing grounds of idle athletes. No longer is it safe to play a round at Cowley, where balls fly in all directions, propelled by the random club heads of light-hearted beginners.

Perhaps this unprecedented revival of a game, which takes several hours to decide, is a doubtful blessing in a seat of learning. Some miles separate Oxford from Frilford, while Huntercombe is a three-

quarters of an hour run by motor from the city. Provided that the undergraduates confine themselves of an afternoon to the attractions of Frilford Heath, then no scholastic harm is done. But if, on the other hand, Huntercombe is visited, there is a whole day devoted to golf at the expense of morning lectures and intellectual advancement. Forbidden fruits are sweet: and no more pleasurable experience exists than to cut oneself adrift from all moral ties of mental employment, to set off at 9.30 to the hills above Dorchester, and to forget for seven hours or so that there is anything in life except golf. For my part, I am not ashamed to admit that the happiest days of my life were spent in this manner. Within the confines of Oxford the advent of 'schools' hung like a thundercloud overhead, ready to break into a deluge of unanswerable questions; while, seventeen miles away, for the mere asking of a lift in a motor vehicle, oblivion and peace of mind could be restored.

Oxford lies within the heart of small hills, which slope down towards the winding valley of the Thames. The colleges and spires, viewed from the neighbourhood of Boar's Hill, resemble in the evening light an elaborate piece of jewellery; and poets have recalled in their verse the delicate beauty of the scene.

' And thou hast climbed the hill
And gained the white brow of the Cumnor range,
Turned once to watch . . .
The line of festal light in Christ Church hall.'

The golfer, too, returning from his frequent pilgrimages, exhausted by the rigour of his game, often, no doubt, has been refreshed by the distant vision of Oxford reflected in the glow of setting suns. Her intimate charm is more fully appreciated from without

than from within ; and perhaps the poet and the golfer have this in common, that they have both looked down upon the city from afar off. For all the compelling attractions of Oxford life, friendly gatherings round the fire, or summer evenings spent upon the river, the golfer during the hours of daylight feels irresistibly drawn towards the fresh clean air and open spaces of Huntercombe or Frilford.

Frost, snow, or fog seldom deter him from the pursuit of his favourite recreation ; and, to illustrate his keenness, I well remember an occasion, when all these elements were combined to render golf so miserable an occupation, that none but the most optimistic undergraduate would persist in the effort to make the best of it. Four of us reached the Huntercombe Golf Club in due course, but a mantle of snow some six inches deep covered the ground, so far as a vision blurred by the banks of mist could reveal anything. Nothing daunted, however, we set off for 'pastures new,' and in a spirit of blind adventure stumbled upon the Sonning Golf Club. There, conditions were comparatively favourable. It is true that a thick yellow fog enveloped the course, and the turf, owing to incessant frost, rang underfoot like cast iron, but little or no snow could be discovered. Thus at last we came to a happy hunting ground and a couple of rounds were enjoyed to our full satisfaction. This represents, in the main, the Oxford attitude to golf : the pitch of enthusiasm which is reached and the readiness to accept in a good cause the unequal gifts of fortune as they come.

It does not matter how indifferent a performer he may be, how slight the means of transport or how the weather may be likely to behave, some Spartan

golfer, his clubs slung over his back, will pedal his bicycle furiously up hill and down dale in order to get in his round of eighteen holes before darkness descends.

Since the war, the standard of University golf, if indeed it has not risen in the case of a few of the leading players, has improved, so far as the majority of those in the running for their 'blue' are concerned. The trial matches, which are held at the beginning of the two winter terms, attract a large field of promising recruits. It is no unusual occurrence to find as many as fifteen couples or more fighting for prospective places in the University side; and the captain's ultimate choice for the two last places becomes a knotty problem, since five or six golfers of about equal merit will have claims for inclusion which cannot be overlooked, and can only be determined by setting them one against the other in mortal combat. In these duels nerves are often the deciding factor, because large issues are at stake, and the honour of representing Oxford against Cambridge is a privilege of a lifetime. Whether it is the best policy to decide the matter in this way, with so much hanging upon the event, is a doubtful question, and a severe set-back cannot but have a demoralising effect upon an impressionable nature. For this reason trial matches are a severe test and tend rather to promote the steady uninspired golfer at the expense of the more brilliant and temperamental player. The system has yet to be devised by which the finer and more promising amongst them are not subjected to such a crucial ordeal at the last minute, but are carefully watched and given every opportunity of slipping easily into the side, if their style of play and execution show especial promise.

The undergraduate whose good fortune it is to be practically assured of his place against the rival University will play, in the meantime, against the well-known golf clubs round London, and against the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society. Eminent golfers, whom he formerly recognised only in print and knew only as famous names in the golfing world, will take shape before his eyes. They will become no longer imaginary heroes, but creatures of flesh and blood. Upon acquaintance, they will of necessity no longer appear supermen, and even upon the links their vulnerable points will be detected. Not only will the undergraduate gain confidence in himself by discovering errors in the play of those whom he once thought infallible, but he will also find that there is in the game of golf more than he had previously imagined. The Society consists of members who have all served in the ranks of University golf; they have in time past fought the same battles that he is now fighting over again. They have passed through his present phase, and have eventually revisited their Alma Mater with the rough edges of their golfing style removed and fortified by a wealth of experience in the art of winning matches. The younger idea will be introduced to new shots with every club, the game will become invested with fresh significance, his preconceived notion of a perfectly played hole will be altered, the difference between the right and wrong way of approaching a golfing problem will become evident, and the standard of his ambitions should be raised.

The foursome does not readily appeal to young and energetic enthusiasts, whose chief delight it will always be to hit their own balls throughout the round. The responsibility of a partner robs the play of some

of its enjoyment. The character of a game which compels a blameless partner to retrieve the mistakes which you yourself have made seems, upon the face of things, unjust ; and the possibility that you may be forced to delve into bunkers and negotiate all manner of trouble not of your own making will appear equally distasteful. The foursome combination that works smoothly and harmoniously is not often attained even in the most practised circles. At Oxford or Cambridge I should say that it practically does not exist ; and usually it is only in after years that the distinct charm of the foursome is realised. It says a good deal for the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society, true lovers of the foursome as they are, that their influence in this direction has been so tactfully employed and so strongly felt that the annual Varsity match is now partly decided by this classic form of golf. Before I went up to Oxford, it seemed to me that the whole value of a foursome consisted in its convenient arrangement, by which two ladies might be introduced into a game between two men without disturbing the balance of the match. The suggestion that four men should waste their time with two balls, when four might be employed, struck me as a wanton misuse of the material at hand. So soon, however, as I came to know the Society and to appreciate their methods, I renounced this narrow point of view, and in moments of enthusiasm even held the opinion that the foursome combined all the noblest features of golf, because it insisted upon that which is common to every great game—the necessity of playing for your side. I know many of my friends at Oxford regarded the two-ball foursome in the same light ; so that, despite the selfish but none the less irresistible attractions

of the four-ball match, we began to consider a day's golf incomplete without its inclusion. Gradually the team sorted itself into pairs, who were ready to challenge other confident pairs, and the spirit of foursome play became incorporated into Oxford golf.

A famous match, which might have been considered a 'rag game' if it had not been that the expenses of taxis and green fees fell to the lot of the losers, took place two or three times a term at Frilford. Mr. Cyril Tolley, partnered by a famous Rugger player whose prowess on the links cannot have compared favourably with the grand work he put in upon the football field, used to oppose two moderate players who were accustomed to represent the University's second side. It is possible to gain some line to the form of Mr. Tolley's partner if it is understood that the chief strength of his game consisted in using a niblick whenever it was his turn to drive, and making sure that his ball was teed up at least three inches from the ground. Even then, I understand, contact was not absolutely certain. Nevertheless, Mr. Tolley often carried his side to victory, and in the course of these titanic struggles probably produced more astonishing shots than at any other time in his career.

Perhaps one of the best foursome partners in the Oxford team of 1920 and 1921 was Mr. G. R. Mellor. As a single player, I know he will forgive me if I say that he was often erratic; but in the other form of the game he was the personification of steadiness. Always a fine, reliable putter and a determined match-player, the knowledge that it was essential that he should keep the ball in play and give his partner every opportunity of hitting the succeeding shot from as fair a lie as might be found, exercised an unusual

restraint in his wooden-club play, and his strokes up to the hole became notably more accurate. If he could have played during the course of his singles matches as steadily as he did when he was engaged in a foursome, I believe he would have been by several strokes a better player, although at any time it needed excellent golf to beat him. Apart from the intrinsic merit of the foursome, it teaches a golfer to think ahead, just in the same manner that a good billiard player is accustomed to lay his plans several strokes in advance of the one he is actually playing at the moment.

The yearly meeting between Oxford and Cambridge is an event of outstanding importance for those who take part in it. In no match is the golfer quite so anxious to defeat his adversary by as many holes as he can. If, however, the issue of a game is long in doubt, and the thirty-six holes are all but played, nerves will reach a breaking point. The match may be lost or won as far as Oxford or Cambridge are concerned, yet two opponents may be seen approaching the last hole, intent only upon their individual match, playing as though the fate of nations depended upon their efforts. Indeed, nerves have played more pranks in the inter-Varsity match than upon any other noteworthy occasion. Some episodes may have appeared laughable to the onlookers, but for the players, oblivious to all and everything but the ordeal through which they are passing, each situation and each stroke is charged with tragic emotion. I have personally the liveliest recollections—and they will remain with me to my dying day—of my game with Mr. J. Walker at Hoylake last year. It was the most strenuous match in which I have ever engaged during my brief period of serious golf, and to me it was notable, not so

much for the putt which I holed to win the contest upon the last green, as for the shorter putt I almost missed upon the thirty-second. Not more than a foot and a half long, it was apparently a trivial incident in a good game to all except the man who had it to hole. At that stage I was one up, but to me it seemed as if I should not secure the lead again if I did not retain it at that point. All knowledge of how to putt had forsaken me, and I am bound to confess that if I had missed that short putt by any number of inches I should have been barely surprised. As fate willed it, the ball entered the hole, although, when I struck it, my putter was waving about as unsteadily as a leaf in a gale of wind. Never before nor since have I experienced such a sensation of horror as that tiny putt created in my mind.

The finest shot that I have myself witnessed in a Varsity match, and my experience is confined to the two occasions upon which it has been played since the war, was performed by Mr. Goadby at the thirty-seventh hole at Hoylake in the third foursome match of the first day. The terrors of the first hole at Hoylake are well known. The famous ditch skirting the Field runs parallel on the right to the second shot if the drive has been well hit and well placed. Mr. Goadby's partner had put him short of the corner and so much to the right of the proper line that in playing for the green it became necessary to cross some portion of the Field itself. Two considerations did not help to make the stroke any easier. In the first place, a strong wind was blowing across the course from left to right, and more than a shade against the direction of the shot; secondly, the ball was lying closely upon a down-hill slope. Mr. Goadby courage-

ously took his driver, and hit a mighty blow well to the left of the flag. The wind brought the ball round a fraction at the end of its flight, and it finished a few yards short of the centre of the green : a magnificent shot of nearly 250 yards, brought off at that stage of the game when everything depended upon the success of his venture. Eventually he and his partner were victorious, and if ever a particular shot deserved to win a match, to my mind that shot was the most deserving.

The best golf played in these last two matches was accomplished by Mr. Cyril Tolley in 1920 at Sunningdale, and there are critics who maintain that never in the history of the event itself has his play been surpassed. Mr. J. S. F. Morrison was his unfortunate opponent, and it was naturally no disgrace to him that he was beaten by nine and seven to play, because up to that point Mr. Tolley had averaged even fours in a manner that made golf look the simplest game in the world.

It was not my good fortune to watch this performance of Mr. Tolley's, since I was engaged in my own match at the time, but I can understand how terrible an adversary he must have been from the form he produced in a four-ball match at Huntercombe. Upon that particular occasion he holed out in sixty-nine strokes for the round. Those who are acquainted with the course know its difficulties. Narrow fairways flanked with masses of impenetrable gorse, soft turf upon which the ball may not run far, and exceedingly long second shots up to small greens, affording a beautiful putting surface, do not encourage low scoring. Despite a strong wind which blew across the holes at every angle, Mr. Tolley made no vestige of a mistake. His

driving was enormous and deadly straight; his long iron shots scarcely left the pin. I never wish to see a finer all-round exhibition of the game nor greater power of club.

The prosperity of a school of golf is often judged by the merit of the players who represent it. In this, I think, the standard of play at Oxford has deserved more than ordinary recognition. Some players of undoubted possibilities have been in residence since the war, and have taken the field against Cambridge. Some of them, perhaps, have not yet made good nor fulfilled their early promise. The future, however, is a sealed book, and their prowess, for all we know, is destined to be inscribed on its pages before many years elapse.

Mr. J. B. Beck commanded special attention. The strength of his game lay in the fact that it had few weaknesses. He may not have been an exceedingly long driver, but from the tee he hit the ball consistently beyond the average length. From the cleeck down to the mashie niblick he was sound rather than remarkably brilliant. A very crisp player of short approaches, he succeeded in conveying the impression that if he did not lay the ball stone-dead he would at any rate place it moderately close to the hole. With regard to his method and manner of hitting the ball, no higher compliment can be paid him than by remarking that no young amateur has fewer obvious defects in his style. Above all, he is an undeniably fine putter. Possessed of an exceedingly equable temperament, the petty annoyances of golf did not seem to trouble him; indeed, so light-hearted a player did he appear that it was hard work to impress upon him that golf might be a serious occupation.

A pleasant and even game only appealed to him ; and I have the private suspicion that, out of the kindness of his heart, he devised ways and means of carrying a match to the last green if it appeared likely that he might gain too decisive a victory. Serious tournaments did not interest him, and perhaps for that reason he enjoyed his golf more than most people. But it was no surprise to his friends that he should afterwards contest the final of the West of England Championship.

Mr. H. S. Malik played for Oxford in 1914, and again in 1921. In this way he was the connecting link between the old golf and the new. He drove immense distances with a long, effortless swing, and played the iron shot that comes in towards the hole from right to left with considerable skill. Probably, owing to the length of his back swing, his pitching strokes did not inspire such great confidence as the rest of his game, but the results justified this departure from orthodoxy. His touch with a putter was very sure and clean. As a cricketer and a golfer he was an artist to the tips of his fingers. If fine style in golf represents control of the club head, combined with the greatest freedom of swing allowable, then indeed Mr. Malik was a stylist. No player has wielded a golf club with such lithesome grace, nor probably possessed such a pair of steely, yet supple wrists. He can have no imitators, and to the mind of Oxford men there is only 'one Malik.'

Mr. I. S. Thomas may be considered the best left-handed golfer who has represented Oxford. At his best he was a brilliant performer with the iron clubs. From a distance of a hundred and twenty yards from the hole or thereabout, no member of the side could

emulate him ; but his wooden-club play left something to be desired, since a quick hook was liable to assert itself when he was out of form. He played fourth for Oxford in both the Varsity matches which have taken place since the war.

Mr. Tolley, however, has been the figurehead around which Oxford golf has centred. His fame has spread to many countries. It would be idle to discuss in detail his fine swing, his terrible power from the tee and through the green, the infinite variety and excellence of his strokes, for these characteristics of his are common knowledge to all who have followed his meteoric progress during the last three years. Not only did he gain much personal distinction and undying glory when he captured the Amateur Championship of 1920, but he added yet another signal achievement to the records of University sport. The undergraduate champion, upon his return to Oxford with the laurels he had gathered at Muirfield fresh upon him, was appropriately received. He and his cab were dragged down the 'High' by the main efforts of his overjoyed friends, with no less hearty acclaim than that with which a victorious emperor and his chariot might have been conducted in triumph through the streets of Rome.

In Mr. Tolley is found the one British amateur of our day who is capable of beating an opponent who is right on the top of his game. It is a rare gift to be able to rise to such heights of play when the situation demands it ; and it calls for a combination of qualities in which skill and courage are, above all, present. The majority of golfers, during the course of a match, realise of necessity the moment when their position is almost more than desperate, and to all appearances